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MRU plans to expand degrees, boost enrolment by 60 per cent

Future. School will remove applied offerings, take in more out-of-town learners

JEREMY NOLAIS & JENNIFER FRIESEN
calgary@metronews.ca

Kara Dowhaniuk is among students at Mount Royal University questioning whether the institution has too readily abandoned its roots in a bid to contend with larger institutions. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

Mount Royal University will aim to add baccalaureate degrees and shed its applied offerings, all while dramatically boosting its enrolment and taking in far greater numbers of aboriginal and international students, according to a draft of the institution's 10-year strategic plan.

The document — titled Learning Together, Leading Together — charts an ambitious path to 2025 for the former community college. It hasn't been formally released by administrators, but Metro obtained a draft copy dated Jan. 7.

Figures inside indicate Mount Royal officials intend to add four unidentified baccalaureate degrees while phasing out its remaining five applied-degree offerings.

The university also has eyes on increasing the number of majors available to students to 60, up from the 42 offered in 2013-14.

The plan also calls for a 60 per cent increase in student enrolment that would see 13,000 learners pass through MRU's doors in the 2024-25 school year.

Representatives with the institution, which became a university in 2009, said they wouldn't comment on the plan until it was approved by the board of governors in late February.

But president David Docherty states in the document that it "provides a framework for excellence."

"It identifies our key strengths as well as areas where additional focus will benefit our students and university," Docherty states. "Learning Together, Leading Together tells the story of who we are and where we are going."

There are some students, however, who question whether Mount Royal is shedding some of the things that originally appealed to them.

Kara Dowhaniuk, a third-year eco-tourism major in the Bachelor of Health and Physical Education program, said she actually preferred the applied-degree offering she was originally enrolled in because it provided more hands-on learning.

"It looks nice on paper and it's good for jobs, but I feel like the community portion just isn't there anymore," she said of the shift to full baccalaureate offerings. "You go to school to get a degree, but you're not getting the street skills related to the program you're in."

She later added: "The more community portion of the school is lost. I find that a lot of people aren't as sociable.... It was a lot easier to meet people and network with them and find job opportunities, whereas now you go to class and you don't build the same kinds of relationships with people, you don't get those skills you're ultimately looking for."

Marc Schroeder, president of the campus faculty association, said he fully supported a push to grow Mount Royal's community but said the strategic plan's vision wouldn't be realized without a renewed funding commitment from the province.

"It's not demand that appears to be an issue; it's the fact that we're very much limited in terms of what (students) can take with the funding we have," he said. "We need to ensure that any seats that we do offer are properly funded."

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Push for GSA-type club at local Catholic school

Education. Spectrum Club founders hope to inspire LGBTQ members, supporters

JEREMY NOLAIS
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It won't be formally referred to as a gay-straight alliance (GSA), but two Calgary students are on the verge of receiving approval to establish what's believed to be the city's first LGBTQ support club operating within the confines of a Catholic school.

Talk of Spectrum Club, a name chosen by Grade 12 student co-founders Carly LeCocq and Julya van der Sloot, actually began before the matter of support for Alberta's gay student population took centre stage in the provincial legislature.

So far, the pair has been given the green light to launch an anti-slur campaign at Bishop Carroll High School, and officials within the building were expected to meet Thursday to discuss approving the club.

Spectrum Club could potentially be precedent-setting, as the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) and every other separate board in the province have not formally recognized clubs that focus primarily on LGBTQ students, instead choosing to broaden their reach to those from non-majority races and other marginalized groups.

Official data provided by CCSD to Alberta Education indicated the organization's schools feature 105 "diversity clubs" and an identical number of "anti-bullying clubs."

But LeCocq said her school has been ahead of the curve.

"We thought it would be a good school to start it out because I didn't think we'd get as much hate from the school community as we would at others," she said.

Spectrum could be 30 to 40 members strong if approved, according to van der Sloot.

She's been watching closely as some LGBTQ community members have criticized the Catholic community's stance on gay-straight alliances.

"Obviously it was a scary project because it's something that has been so controversial in the news lately," van der Sloot said.

Grade 12 students Carly LeCocq, left, and Julya van der Sloot hope to get formal approval from Bishop Carroll High School for Spectrum Club, which would become what's believed to be Calgary's first LGBTQ-specific support club operating within the confines of a Catholic school. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

Catholic community and GSAs

Bishop Fred Henry, who has long provided theological guidance to the Calgary Catholic School District, has expressed support for the Tory government's now-"paused" Bill 10 that would have seen the education minister support establishing gay-straight alliances (GSAs) but not necessarily allow GSA meetings on school property.

- Bill 10 supplanted an offering from Liberal Laurie Blakeman, whose Bill 202 would have guaranteed full support for GSAs in schools.

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Library rebrand hooks readers

Calgary Public Library. January members doubled compared to last year, says CEO

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Since rebranding itself and launching a new campaign at the beginning of 2015 centred around free library cards, the Calgary Public Library is gaining new members at twice the rate of last year.

More than 10,500 new members have signed up since the Jan. 2 launch, which is nearly double what the library saw in new members in all of January 2014.

The library has dropped the $12 annual fee for adult members and now offers Calgarians quick and easy access to services with free signups online via a revamped website, and CEO Bill Ptacek said interest has skyrocketed.

"Twice as many people are signing up for library cards," Ptacek said.

Soon, the library will also deliver cards to students along with information for parents, which he said will have an even bigger impact on new memberships.

"We're anticipating that we should have a really big upsurge in people signing up," Ptacek said.

Amelia Shikongo and her family just moved to Calgary from Toronto a few days ago. Already, she and her children are using the library's services while they get settled in. Her daughter Aune has a stack of books and can't wait to crack them.

"I just got (a library card) yesterday and I signed out three books that are interesting, and I can't wait to read them," Aune said. "I love reading so much."

Amelia added it's really handy to have computers and other library services available to them while they get their ground in a new city.

The libraries newly launched website has also garnered some serious hits. More than 317,000 people checked out the new catalogue, and 475,000 visited the site, which is about twice as much traffic as they are used to seeing.

"It's much better and easier to use right now," Ptacek said. "Our public has been responding very positively to using it."

And these days a card doesn't just get you books off the shelf. The Calgary Library has online courses, e-books and other perks to take advantage of, including an online library of movies and music.

Quoted

"I just got (a library card) yesterday and I signed out three books that are interesting, and I can't wait to read them. I love reading so much." Aune Shikongo

Amelia Shikongo, left, and her children Herman, Patrick and Aune, stand in the central branch of the Calgary Public Library, ready to check out books with their new free library cards. HELEN PIKE/METRO

Police seek women in connection with New Year's shooting

CCTV surveillance images of the three women police want to identify. CONTRIBUTED

Calgary police are asking for the public's help in identifying three women who may have information on the New Year's Day shooting that left six injured and one dead.

Police said investigators have obtained CCTV surveillance images of the three women, who were believed to be at the party where the shooting took place.

"We don't have any indication of what the relationship was between them or anybody else at the party; we do know that they were at the party," Staff Sgt. Colin Chisholm said Thursday.

The request for assistance comes roughly three weeks after police were called to a home in the 1900 block of 36 Street SW for reports of shots fired at a house party attended by more than 50 people.

Police said six partygoers received injuries that ranged from minor to serious.

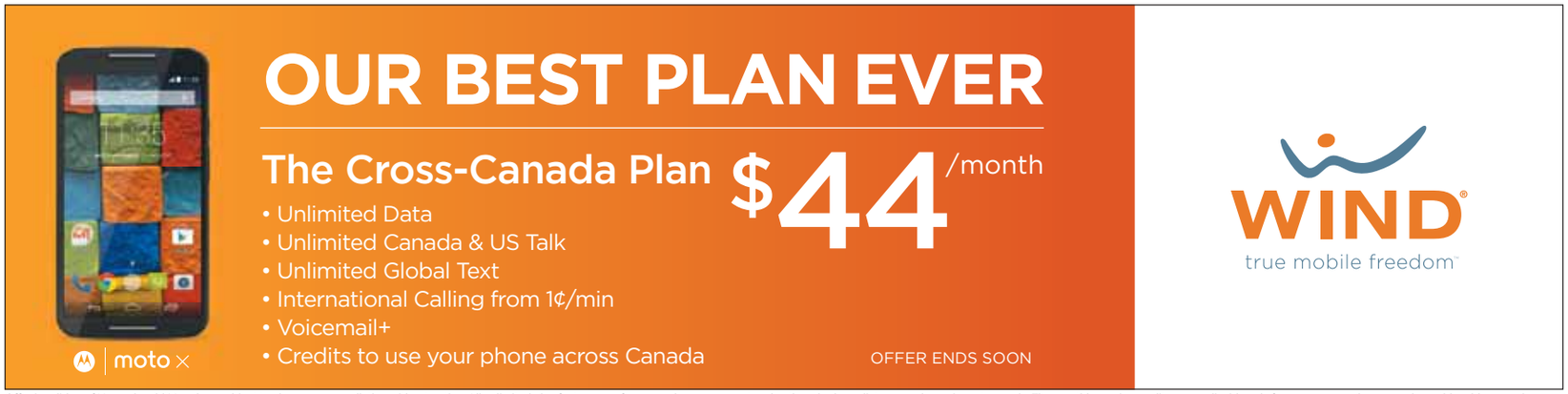
A seventh victim, 26-year-old Abdullahi Ahmed, was transported to hospital with life-threatening conditions and later died in hospital.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Description

Police describe the three women as "lighter-skinned" black females in their 20s.

- The first woman was wearing a fur vest with a jean vest overtop. The second was wearing a red dress and a white coat. The third wore a striped dress.
- Anyone with information about these women or their whereabouts are asked to call police at 1-403-266-1234 or to contact Crime Stoppers.



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THERE'S A TIME AND PLACE FOR DRINKING IN ALBERTA, BUT IT'S NEVER AT CITY HALL

Trouble brewing. City councillors who think it's their right to drink at work should try doing it in the private sector

IN DEFENCE OF
Mike Morrison
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This week, in the hallowed hallways of Calgary City Hall, the topic of the councillors' right to drink was a hot topic. It produced headlines like "City councillors urged to stay sober at work" and, thanks to Mayor Naheed Nenshi, helped bring back the word "blotto."

The debate made all Calgarians look at the way we drink.

I, for example, am part of Canada's nine per cent: that's how many Canadians have a drink every day.

That doesn't mean I'm staggering down Calgary's streets on a daily basis. It means I'm social, so I meet friends for a drink. Or, sometimes, I like to have some wine with my Netflix binge.

A drink. Not usually more than that.

And while nine per cent doesn't seem like a lot of people, I suspect there might have been a little lying on that survey. After all, it feels incredibly strange to be publicly admitting that I have a drink every day. I can feel my parents' disappointment all the way from New Brunswick.

Ever since Albertans voted to end prohibition in 1924, they have been proud drinkers, particularly here in Calgary. The historic Palliser Hotel was Alberta's first licensed hotel, and we're also the city that claims ownership over the Caesar, which, according to Mott's, is now served to Canadians more than 250 million times each year.

During last year's Calgary Stampede, alcohol sales were allowed to start at 8 a.m. (7 a.m. on parade day) and, at last count, there were more than 1,100 private liquor stores in Alberta — good news for 18-year-olds who get to legally drink one year before the majority of Canadians.

Cara Klein and Josie Bajada show off some of the suds set to be served at Ceili's Modern Irish Pub for St. Patrick's Day 2014. Albertans have been proud drinkers since voting to end prohibition in 1924. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO FILE

Not surprising then that, in 2013, Alberta tallied up $2.4 billion in liquor sales, according to Statistics Canada. That's up seven per cent from the year prior, the fastest sales growth in the country.

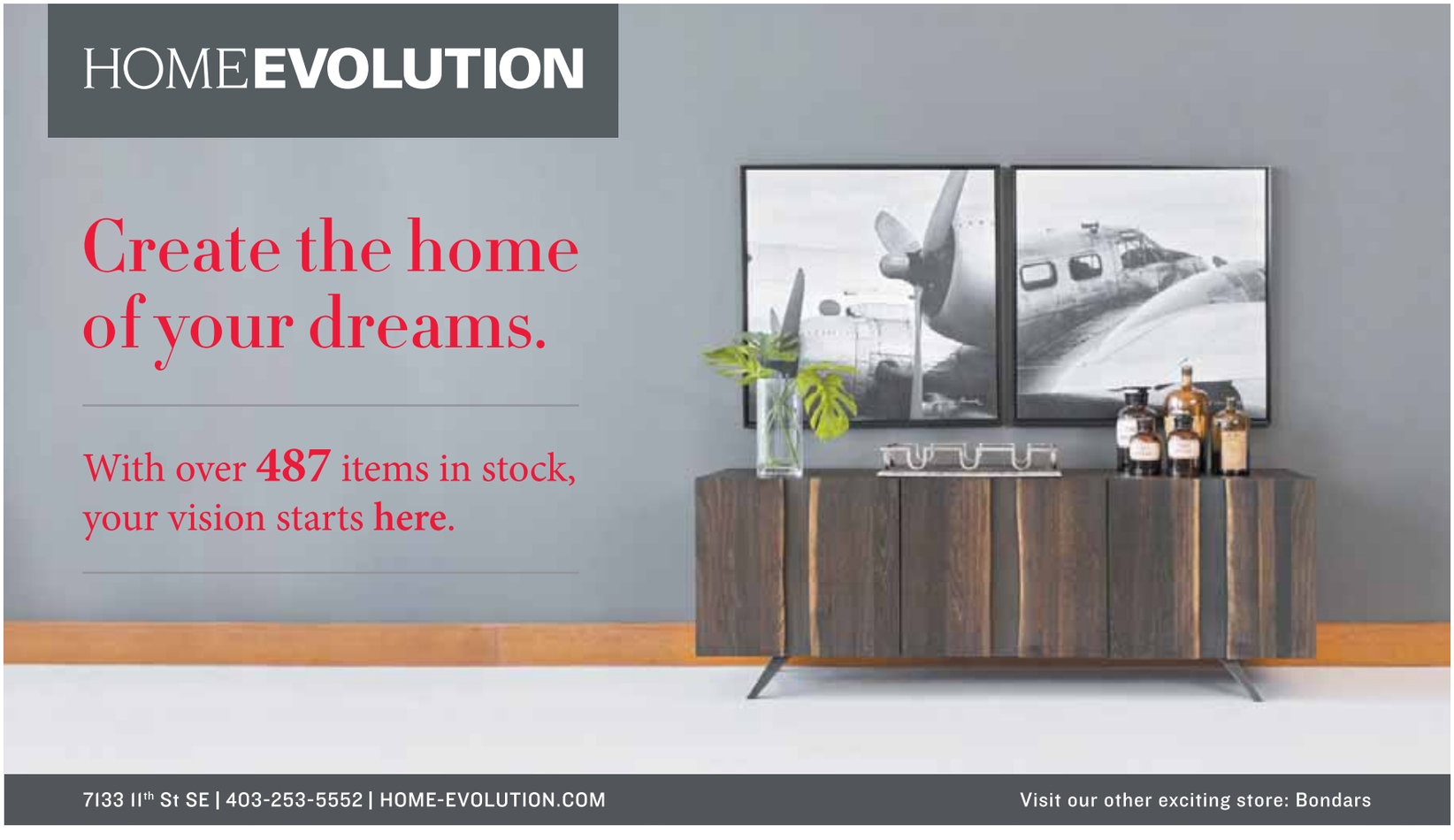
Yes, Albertans love their booze, but there is a time and place. And I'm sorry to tell certain members of city council: it's not at work and it's not ever during workdays.

Of course it would be great to say that councillors should be allowed to drink socially, but if Mayor Nenshi, Coun. Druh Farrell and Coun. Diane Colley-Urquhart are to be believed, some of their colleagues have been abusing this right. So until we know who these councillors are (and I do believe Mayor Nenshi should tell us), then all councillors should lose the right.

Why should councillors get to protect their buddies and voters are none the wiser? Have we learned nothing from Rob Ford?

There are certainly some aspects of being a city councillor that aren't fair, including the fact that they're under a bigger microscope than those who work in the private sector. So, should these councillors believe it's their right to drink during the day or at work events, then they should go back to the private sector. Lots of Calgarians love to drink, yet the vast majority don't get to do it during work hours, nor would they want to.

But there seem to be bigger issues brewing at city hall, and it isn't with malted barley.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Police want more Somali recruits

Outreach. Officials say service is targeting youth and elders to improve relations with Somalian community

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The Calgary Police Service (CPS) says recruiting officers from the city's Somali-Canadian community is a high priority for the force.

Since the beginning of 2015, two members of the Somali-Canadian community were killed by violence. Religious leaders in the community say the sooner they have a larger representation on the force, the better.

"It's very important, it's crucial and it will tackle ... the lack of co-operation between police and the community members," Imam Abdi Hersy told Metro.

"We cannot take any more time before another young life is taken away," he said. "We need police officers that share many common grounds with the Somalian young people on the streets."

Hersy said he believes having officers on the force will provide police insight into the inner workings of the Somali-Canadian community and help youth feel a sense of belonging within Canadian society.

Officials with the CPS said the service is currently trying to target Somali youth and young adults through its Junior Police Academy, Calgary Police Cadets and the Calgary Police Auxiliary Cadet mentorship program.

"This is giving these youth opportunities," said Staff Sgt. Clare Smart with the youth intervention and mentorship unit.

"With this cadet core or the junior police academy, we're not trying to make all of these youth police officers. We're trying to make them good citizens within the community and the surrounding areas."

She explained these programs allow youth a safe space to ask questions and learn about one another and different cultures while also learning more about the CPS.

Smart noted the CPS is working with members of the Somali community to coordinate activities like open houses and presentations on policing in the future.

Bridging gaps

Const. Raul Espinosa, a member of the diversity resource team handling the African portfolio for the Calgary Police Service, said police are also in communication with a number of community leaders and elders. "We need to build that trust and bridge those gaps that exist," Espinosa said. "We understand that these folks ... they come from areas in the world that have been going through lots of unrest, so they see police officers as a branch or an arm of the government. So I kind of see how they come to a new place with that distrust for people like us, for the police," he said. "It takes time and it takes a lot of reaching out to bridge those gaps."

Imam Abdi Hersy speaks with members of the Calgary Police Service and members of the Somali-Canadian community at a meeting between the two groups held on Jan. 10, 2015. MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Tax points, not power, proposed for Alberta cities

From left: Municipal Affairs Minister Diana McQueen, Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, Premier Jim Prentice and Mayor Naheed Nenshi pose with the new "framework agreement" they signed in October. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

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Calgary and Edmonton may not get any new taxation powers from the Alberta government as they negotiate new city charters, but mayors for both cities are now talking about getting a guaranteed chunk of existing — or new — taxes that the province collects.

"In some ways I'd be happier with a sharing of a tax point — a piece of the income tax like they have in Manitoba — or, if there is a sales tax, like they have in Saskatchewan, a piece of that goes to cities," Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson said Thursday.

Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi said that approach has worked well between other levels of government.

"The federal government has found with the provinces that the best way to do that is to transfer tax points, not necessarily tax authority," he said.

The mayors' comments came after Premier Jim Prentice pledged Thursday to have a revised Municipal Government Act (MGA) — legislation that delegates authorities to cities and towns — in place by 2016.

Prentice, in making a similar pledge last October to establish specific city charters for Calgary and Edmonton, said that new agreement "will in no way endorse or permit the creation of new taxation powers" for Alberta's largest municipalities.

Municipal Affairs Minister Diana McQueen said Thursday the new MGA should involve some form of additional revenue flowing to Alberta's cities and towns.

"This MGA is really about empowering and enabling municipalities to do more," she said.

"If there are things that they are going to do more of that we currently do, as a province, then it's only right that the funding that we have to deliver those services now could go to the municipalities."

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The Calgary-Klein PC Association is seeking nominations for individuals interested in becoming the candidate to represent the constituency and the Progressive Conservative Assocation of Alberta in the upcoming election. The nomination period to obtain information, complete the nomination papers, and pay the nomination fee will commence today and will close at 4 PM on February 7th. The nomination meeting (if necessary) will be held from 9:30 AM to 4 PM on February 21st, 2015 at North Haven Community Association. Voters shall be members in good standing of the PCAA, must ordinarily reside in Calgary-Klein, be a Canadian citizen, and be at least 14 years of age. When voting, members must show PCAA Membership card, and two (2) pieces of identification, at least on of which must be photo identification. The boundaries of Calgary-Klein are as dictated on www.elections.ab.ca. Interested parties may obtain further information, sets of nomination papers and details of the nomination process from the Nomination Chairperson, Drew Brown at 403-690-0001.

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Drayton Valley

Man charged after stolen truck driven into Alberta RCMP detachment

A 38-year-old man faces almost a dozen charges after a stolen pickup truck was driven into the side of an Alberta RCMP detachment.

Mounties in Drayton Valley, southwest of Edmonton, say the truck broke through a secure overhead door and caused extensive damage.

The driver then walked into the main part of the building and was taken into custody.

David Yurkiw of Drayton Valley faces 10 charges that include dangerous operation of a motor vehicle.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Highway 2

Mounties charge man who flipped tanker truck

Airdrie RCMP have charged a 59-year-old Calgary man with careless driving. The tanker truck he was driving flipped onto its side after hitting the centre median on Highway 2.

RCMP say the incident occurred at roughly 4 a.m. near CrossIron Mills and as a result, the highway was closed for several hours as crews worked to drain the tanker, which was loaded with gasoline.

A large amount of gasoline was spilled from the container, which RCMP say was compromised during the collision and the Calgary Police Service assisted with traffic restrictions.

The driver of the truck, which was the only vehicle involved in the collision, was uninjured. METRO

This vehicle was being used as an illegal cab at Calgary International Airport by a driver who lacked a licence, registration and insurance. COURTESY CITY OF CALGARY

City inspectors bust airport 'bandit cabs'

Transportation. Three drivers slapped with 10 fines

JEREMY NOLAIS
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City inspectors slapped fines against a trio of drivers running "bandit cabs" out of Calgary International Airport Thursday.

The drivers had been using online advertising to offer their services despite carrying neither a valid cab licence nor proper insurance to use their vehicle for commercial purposes.

In fact, one of the operators was driving without a valid driver's licence, vehicle registration and any form of insurance whatsoever — his ride was hauled away by a tow truck, according to city spokeswoman Carissa Vescio.

"This is a really good reason as to why it's good to have a regulated (taxi) industry, where safety is a priority and all of these things are double- and triple-checked," she said.

The three drivers were slapped collectively with 10 fines. Vescio said it wasn't the first time such a sting operation had been conducted at the airport to crack down on "bandit cab" operations.

The city inspectors actually posed as prospective customers on the advertising site and found the drivers waiting for illegitimate fares on the airport's departure level.

This marks the first time the city has confirmed a crackdown on illegal cab operations at the airport, which has a sole-provider contract for taxi services with Associated Cab.

Last May, the city's chief livery inspector sounded alarms about the potential dangers of hopping into a vehicle being operated by an unlicensed driver after nearly 30 were caught by city inspectors over the prior 18 months.

One of the drivers nabbed in those string of busts had to blow into an interlock device just to start his ride.

Report. Preventative health could lower costs

A University of Calgary report says a provincewide preventative health program could reduce care costs significantly.

Economics professor Herb Emery from the School of Public Policy says the rising cost of health care cannot be supported by taxpayers and other options, including the use of preventative medicine, need to be explored.

"It's widely agreed this is possible and it's estimated up to a quarter of what we're spending on acute-care treatment could be avoided if we could turn down that tap by improving the health of the population," Emery said Thursday.

"What we do know is if we don't deal with this, we're all going to be paying higher taxes for medicare and that sales tax we're talking about now may not be able to stay at five per cent — it may be closer to 10."

He said the preventative health would save eight to 10 per cent systemwide.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Resignation. Horner bows out of provincial politics

After 14 years in politics, former finance minister, leadership candidate and deputy premier Doug Horner is calling it quits.

Horner announced Thursday that he would not be running in the next election and would resign as an MLA at the end of this month.

He said after a lengthy career in provincial politics, it was time to return to the private sector.

After serving in cabinet for a decade, Horner was left out of Premier Jim Prentice's ministry this past fall. Horner said that was not a factor in his decision.

Prentice expressed regret to see Horner stepping down.

"I will be sorry to lose him. We spoke this morning. I understand the reason for his decision," he said.

"Some of what we're dealing with in terms of the financial circumstances in this province right now were made a little easier by some of the very good work that Doug did as minister of finance," he said. METRO

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Clara Hughes

Bell Let's Talk

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Income. Prentice looks at abandoning flat tax

Premier Jim Prentice continued Thursday to talk about the possibility of moving away from Alberta's flat tax and toward a progressive income-tax structure like every other province and territory in Canada.

The idea has been raised as part of a broader discussion between senior government officials over how to deal with Alberta's looming fiscal deficit resulting from the plunging price of oil, according to the premier.

"In that discussion we've looked very closely at the flat tax," Prentice said.

Currently, Albertans pay a flat 10 per cent of their taxable income to the provincial government in addition to the federal portion of their income taxes.

That federal portion starts at 15 per cent for the first $44,701 of taxable income, then grows to 22 per cent on the next $44,700, and so on, maxing out at 29 per cent of taxable income over $138,586.

Other provinces employ a similar, progressive structure for their share of income tax collection.

British Columbia, for example, charges 5.06 per cent on the first $37,869 of taxable income, then 7.7 per cent on the next $37,871, up to 16.8 per cent for income over $150,000.

Prentice said there are "many very positive things" about Alberta's flat tax but he has been "struck by" one of the main downsides.

"For the working poor, it is one of the toughest forms of taxation in this country," the premier said. "I think we need to be mindful of that, especially as we go forward in what is going to be a difficult year."

Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, who last year called on Alberta to abandon its flat tax, said Thursday he "applauds" the premier's openness to the idea.

"I think progressive income taxes have public support — more public support, maybe, than other tools, because people understand there's a fundamental fairness there," Iveson said, noting flat taxes are "very rare" in other jurisdictions around the world.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

New performing arts centre comes to life

Mount Royal Conservatory and Bella Concert Hall.

Project made possible by generous donation

JENNIFER FRIESEN
calgary@metronews.ca

In just a few months, Calgary will be home to a new performing arts centre — something that hasn't happened for the past 30 years.

The Mount Royal Conservatory began back in 1911, but since outgrowing its tight space on the post-secondary institution's third floor, has looked to build a brand new concert hall.

The $90-million project began in 2011, after receiving a record-breaking $21-million donation from philanthropist Don Taylor.

Taylor wanted to pay tribute to his mother — Mary Belle Taylor, known as Bella to her loved ones — which led to new facility's name: The Mount Royal University Conservatory and the Bella Concert Hall.

Construction is set to wrap up this August, and conservatory director Paul Dornian said it's been a long time coming.

"It's been really an exciting and interesting project, but to see the end in sight is really something," he said.

The conservatory will be the largest teaching institution of its kind in Canada, and will have Calgary's leading arts organizations running programs for the public. The Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra will be setting up shop and the Calgary Performing Arts Festival will be making the space its new home.

Rosabel Choi, manager of education and community outreach at the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, said the partnership has a little extra meaning to her.

When Choi was 10 years old, she began studying music at the Conservatory before leaving to study musical arts at Arizona State University. Now, she's returned home to find her life has come full-circle.

"It was a big part of my life," she said. "To come back and see this beautiful theatre being built ... it's very meaningful to me."

Despite the ongoing construction, an open house is scheduled for Saturday at 1 p.m. for community members to drop in and check out the progress for themselves.

Building

Construction of the new performing arts centre cost $90 million.

- The building spans 8,700 square metres.
- The conservatory began in 1911 as one of Mount Royal's original programs.
- More than 4,000 students come through the conservatory each year.
- The concert hall ceiling was crafted out of cherry wood to look like rose petals.
- Features include 43 private teaching studios, five early childhood classrooms, five master classrooms, six rehearsal halls, two traditional classrooms and one multipurpose room.

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Conservatory director Paul Dornian stands in the new 773-seat Bella Concert Hall under construction at Mount Royal University. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

Royal Oak. City to raze snow fort deemed unsafe

What city snowplows giveth, city Bobcats taketh away.

Creative residents of Royal Oak turned a snow mountain created by a city plow into a fortress — complete with a tunnel and staircase — but the winter hideout has been deemed structurally unsound and slated for demolition.

Calgary's parks department said the snow fort was to be destroyed Thursday afternoon by a Bobcat crew of one after a concerned citizen reported it via the 311 app.

"While very cool and inventive I am concerned about the safety of the younger kids should the roof give way," the 311 service request reads.

After failing an on-sight inspection, David Hobson, parks superintendent for the northwest area, said a Bobcat will be sent to dismantle the melting structure.

Hobson said these kinds of complaints are quite rare.

"Each case is reviewed independently to ensure that we're balancing the safety of citizens while encouraging our children to be outside and to be active," Hobson said. "It's very occasionally we get these calls."

A photo of the snow fort digitally submitted to Calgary's 311 service. CONTRIBUTED

Hobson said a representative from the city working in the area inspected the snowy mound. After reporting back to parks, it was determined the fort is not structurally sound, and needed to be taken down before someone gets hurt.

"Because of warmer temperatures expected there was a concern that the tunnel would collapse," Hobson said. "We have to remove the fort."

HELEN PIKE/METRO

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Ready to Wreck and roll again

New exhibitions. Calgary art collective Wreck City is looking for spaces to transform

HELEN PIKE
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A one-time art project that saw as many as 10,000 spectators flock to an artists' village of sorts in Sunnyside has now become a collective, and they're looking to set up shop in your abandoned property.

Wreck City was an eight-day art event put on thanks to Bucci Developments and Calgary's Awesome Foundation in April 2013. More than 100 artists transformed a block of houses slated for demolition, creating an array of pieces out of the space they were given.

Since their hiatus (other than a project called Phantom Wing), the now collective has come forward with a new project — Wreck City presents: ?

"After about a year we sat down and thought … there was so much interest," said Caitlind Brown, one of the curators. "We are hoping to continue doing interesting projects in alternative spaces whenever we see possibilities."

Their next show is slated to coincide with Sled Island, a summer music festival hosted in Calgary. Brown said she expects art exhibitions to be music-themed.

"I would love to see artists transform full rooms into musical instruments," said Brown. "Or maybe making musical instruments out of the buildings."

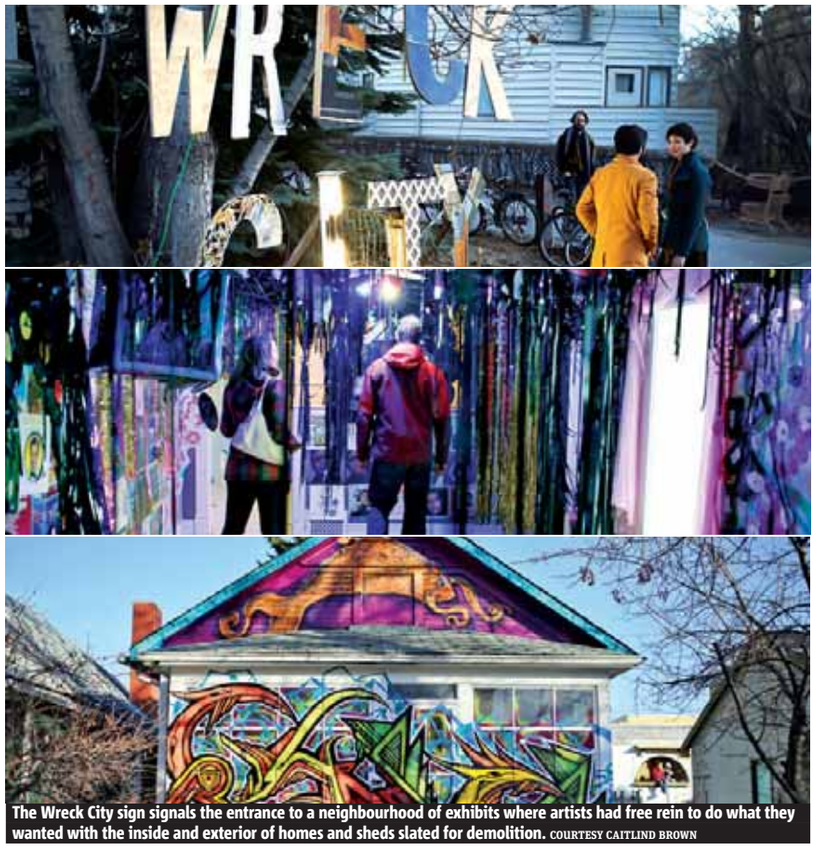
Now the collective is relentlessly searching for prime real estate, slated for demolition, of course, to host artists in. Although potential locations are still hush-hush, curators do have a "wish list" of sorts.

"We intend to keep our eyes and ears open," Brown said. "In Calgary there is certainly a possibility of us finding a space that would be perfect."

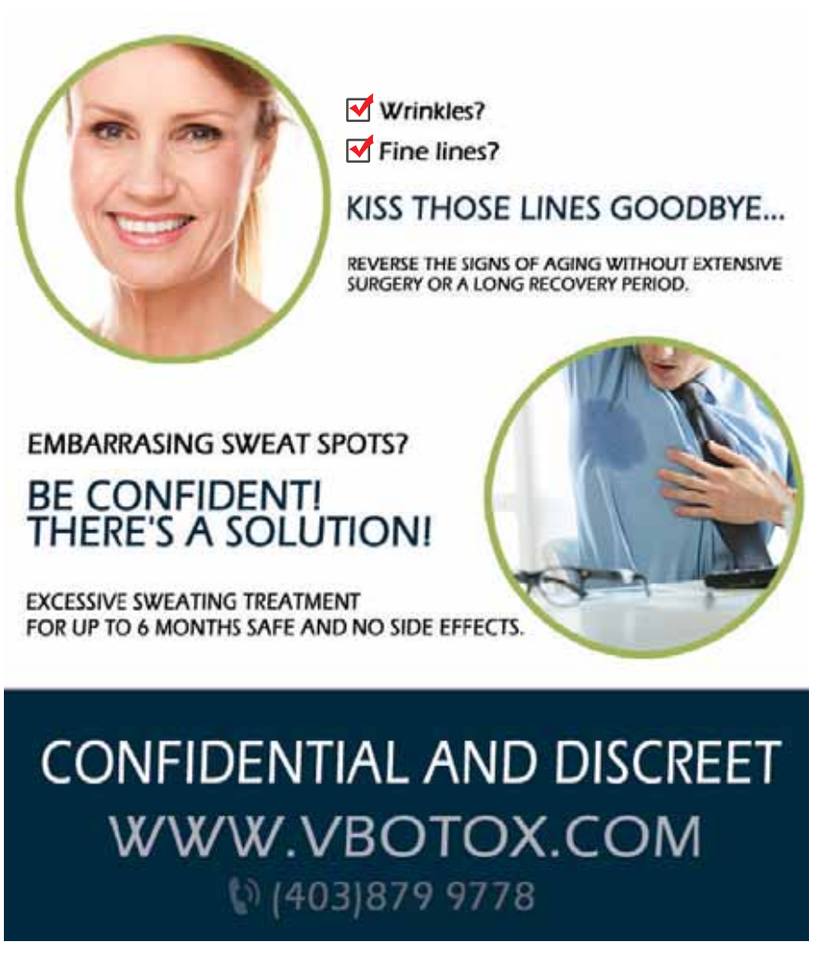
Once locations are secured, Brown said artists will "move in" and begin working with their surroundings — not only bringing art in but moulding the space and incorporating it with their work.

When

The festival and exhibition will run from June 25 to 28.



The Wreck City sign signals the entrance to a neighbourhood of exhibits where artists had free rein to do what they wanted with the inside and exterior of homes and sheds slated for demolition. COURTESY CAITLIND BROWN



'Worn out' Father David Bauer Arena to undergo upgrades

One of Calgary's best-known arenas is about to get a makeover.

The City of Calgary recently issued a request for proposals on a number of upgrades needed at the Father David Bauer Arena, including the replacement of the arena's boards, its chiller and its refrigerated concrete slab.

"It's simply just worn out," said Heather Bruce, manager of recreation in the city's west region.

"It's reached the end of its lifespan, and in order to continue operating the arena, we need to replace these things."

Sport flooring — which is designed to handle heavy foot traffic — in the lobby of the Father David Bauer Arena, as well as the neighbouring Norma Bush Arena, will also be replaced.

Bruce said the arena, which is home to the University of Calgary Dinos and Western Hockey League offices, is considered a "significant amenity" in the city's inventory.

The upgrades are expected to commence between April 1 and Oct. 31, and Bruce said the city has worked to ensure impact to users would be minimal.

"We have been able to accommodate all of the historical bookings at other facilities," she said.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Prentice on oil recovery: 'Prices are not going to bounce back'

Premier Jim Prentice says there's no chance that the province can "ride things out" while waiting for a rebound in oil prices.

Prentice says a full discussion must be held with Albertans to find a way to deal with a decline of $7 billion in resource revenues triggered by a fall in world oil prices to below $50 US a barrel.

"I know there is a thought out there that we should just ride this out and prices will rebound and we'll be back into happier times," Prentice said Thursday.

"That is not the advice we are receiving."

Prentice noted that both financial and energy experts have made it clear prices aren't going to recover any time soon.

He said it's expected a barrel of oil could be selling for $62 US next year and maybe $68 US the year after that.

But he added it isn't likely to move much beyond that for some time.

"This is a different market circumstance than we've seen in other commodity cycles. Prices are not going to bounce back."

Alberta has to look for other ways to make up the shortfall, including a change in taxation, Prentice said.

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There's no need for speed, says artist

Calgary Biennial.
Max out your driving speed at 90 km/h and go a little greener, Dick Averns suggests through his new project

JENNIFER FRIESEN
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Ever since being deployed to the Middle East as an official war artist in 2008, Dick Averns has campaigned for a shift in how Calgarians drive.

"When I realized that I was heading out there, it struck me," said Averns, a professor at the Alberta College of Art and Design. "What are my own implications in the conundrum of oil and conflict? I should do something about my own environment footprint and oil on the home front."

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, driving 90 km/h is the most efficient speed for lasting fuel and fewer emissions. Additionally, research from Statistics Canada finds that gasoline makes up half of the energy consumed by the average Canadian household.

Through billboards, car decals and lectures, Averns is challenging Calgarians' driving mindset, and says that if we were to slow down on highways, we could keep more money in the bank and emit fewer toxins in our air.

He joined the Calgary Biennial art project this year by turning his sustainability ideals into a performance art piece called 90 km/h Economy Drive.

Steven Cottingham, curator of the Calgary Biennial, describes the four-month instalment as a "guerrilla-art exhibition" that uses public space as a platform for social change. He said Averns' project was a way to challenge the status quo in Calgary.

"Calgary is more or less built on the oil economy," said Cottingham. "It's kind of a tongue-in-cheek idea to slow down as a way to help the environment, because it's unrealistic to cut our fuel or cars entirely."

Averns said that with gas prices falling, a lot of people will be careless with their fuel, but he described the low cost of fuel as a symptom of a larger disease.

"People will tell you right now, 'Oh, well, gas is the cheapest it's ever been, why should I care?' But a lot of people are going to be losing jobs," he said. "As a performance-art project, this is the opportunity to change the way you go about things."

Calgary artist Dick Averns uses car decals embossed with a reflective "90" as a way to campaign for a shift to driving 90 km/h on highways.
JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

Report. Teachers, parents split on digital reporting

Some Alberta parents are taking issue with a new report that suggests digital report tools used in the province's schools are more of a hindrance than a helper for educators.

The Alberta Teachers' Association says 1,100 teachers were polled across the province on digital tools such as StudentsAchieve and PowerSchool.

The report found that 63 per cent of teachers don't think digital reporting tools have enhanced the level of instruction and assessment in classrooms, while 40 per cent agreed communication with parents hasn't improved.

Edmonton parent Wendy Western said SchoolZone — used by the city's public school district to report student grades, track yellow buses and post important notes to parents — has been a great way to communicate with her daughter's teachers and the school.

"I like that the information that used to … go home in a kid's backpack, you get it in one piece. It's no longer crumpled up in the bottom of their backpack," said Western, who serves as school council vice-president for Michael Strembitsky.

The program costs about $250,000 per year to maintain, said Edmonton public board staff.

A spokesperson from Calgary's Board of Education told Metro the district has been working with teachers to identify possible workload issues and digital reporting tools.

LEAH HOLOIDAY/METRO IN EDMONTON

RCMP

Funeral set for slain Mountie

A regimental funeral to honour the life and service of Const. David Matthew Wynn of the St. Albert RCMP detachment is set to take place at Servus Credit Union Place Monday at 2 p.m.

Wynn was shot by Shawn Maxwell Rehn last Saturday while investigating reports of a stolen vehicle at St. Albert's Apex Casino.

The funeral will be televised live.

METRO

Crime

RCMP recover trailer heaters

Strathmore RCMP have recovered 29 stolen trailer heaters taken from an Ontario-based business.

The heating units were found in an industrial property in the Wrangler Industrial Park area. The merchandise was stolen during the Christmas season from Mississauga, Ont.

Valued at $377,000, the stolen property has been returned to the owner. The RCMP are still investigating. METRO

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Shandra and Matt Tymchuk, with four-month-old Isaac, say procedures available in the new hybrid operating room at the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute have allowed them to delay needed heart surgery until the baby grows stronger. LUCY HAINES/METRO

New OR buys time for young hearts

Health. Alberta Heart Institute provides options for youngsters and their families

Thanks to a new hybrid operating room at Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute in Edmonton, patients like four-month-old Isaac Tymchuk have been given the gift of time. Young Isaac can now avoid a highly invasive heart procedure until he has a chance to grow stronger.

"We're so lucky to have this option today; it buys us time to see how Isaac's heart will grow before going on with other repairs," said Isaac's dad Matt, who, with wife Shandra, found out about Isaac's congenital heart defect at 21 weeks gestation.

The milestone procedure for Isaac's aortic valve stenosis involved in-utero treatment in Toronto to help his left heart valve stay open until birth.

When he was just 16 days old, an interventional cardiologist (using minimally invasive, catheter-based techniques) and a cardiac surgeon worked at the same time in an operating theatre with the advanced imaging equipment that is needed for catheter procedures.

"We were able to perform the less-invasive procedure initially, which eliminates the need to put a two-week-old boy on a heart-lung machine," said Dr. Andrea Wan, pediatric cardiologist at the Stollery Children's Hospital. "By delaying a complex surgery until he's older, it'll improve the chances of a positive outcome for Isaac."

"We're fortunate to have this technique," added cardiac surgeon Dr. Mohammed Al Aklabi, who inserted bands to regulate the flow of blood to the lungs while Dr. Wan inserted a stent through a catheter.

Shandra said that other than watching Isaac's weight and monitoring his blood oxygen, Isaac is able to be at home in Calgary until he's strong enough for further surgeries.

"If he was born last year, we wouldn't have the chance we do now," she said.

LUCY HAINES/METRO

Congenital heart defect

- Aortic valve stenosis is a narrowing of the valve between the left ventricle of the heart and the largest artery in the body. About one per cent of children are born with a congenital heart defect.
- The University Hospital Foundation provided the $6.6 million needed to fully equip the hybrid OR. About 50 procedures have been performed here since the OR opened last April.

Appeals court orders new trial for mom accused of strangling daughter

A mother accused of strangling her teenage daughter will face a new trial.

The Alberta Court of Appeal has overturned an October 2013 ruling that found that Aset Magomadova was too ill from cancer to face another second-degree murder trial.

Two of three Appeal Court judges wrote that while her medical condition evokes sympathy, the judge failed to explicitly address the community's interest in seeing a murder charge proceed to trial.

"Sympathy, as understandable as it may be, cannot fill gaps in meeting the required legal standard," said Justice Myra Bielby and Justice Paul Jeffrey in a ruling released Thursday.

Magomadova was charged with second-degree murder in 2007 after her 14-year-old daughter, Aminat, was choked to death with a scarf in Calgary.

The family emigrated to Canada from Chechnya in 2003. Court heard that Aminat was having trouble adapting to her new home and had a number of scrapes with the law. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Winnipeg named Canada's most racist; mayor pledges 'to turn this ship around'

Racism. The city's citizens have a duty to change how they relate with one another, says mayor

The mayor of Manitoba's capital tearfully promised Thursday to fight racism and intolerance after his city was branded Canada's most racist by a national magazine.

Brian Bowman stood surrounded by dozens of aboriginal and community leaders and admitted Winnipeg has a problem with racism. The city's first Métis mayor broke down as he talked about passing on his heritage to his young children.

"My wife is Ukrainian heritage. My family is Métis," he said as he choked back tears. "I want my boys to be as proud of both of those family lines."

Maclean's magazine published a cover story that gave Winnipeg the dubious distinction. It cited the huge gap between aboriginals and non-aboriginals as well as the recent high-profile death of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine, whose body was found in August wrapped in plastic in the Red River.

It also comes shortly after an inquest report into the death of Brian Sinclair, an aboriginal double-amputee who died during a 34-hour wait for care in a city hospital's emergency room in 2008. Some staff testified that they assumed he was drunk or homeless.

The reaction to the article from city hall was swift. The police chief, the provincial treaty commissioner, chiefs and community leaders assembled — not to refute the article but to promise to do something about the issue it highlighted.

"We do have racism in Winnipeg.... You can't run away from facts," Bowman said following a closed-door traditional smudging ceremony. "Ignorance, hatred, intolerance, racism exists everywhere.

Mayor Brian Bowman speaks about Winnipeg being labelled Canada's most racist city while Grand Chief Derek Nepinak looks on at Winnipeg's city hall on Thursday. SHANE GIBSON/METRO

"Winnipeg has a responsibility right now to turn this ship around and change the way we all relate."

Bowman said that means having an open dialogue with aboriginal leaders before taking concrete action.

Grand Chief Derek Nepinak with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs said keeping the lines of communication open is key. But he warned that combating racism is a huge challenge.

"I guarantee you that, right now, somebody is having a racist experience in a restaurant or on the streets in Winnipeg somewhere. I'm not here to pacify that or to say that it's OK," Nepinak said.

"There are people who are wilfully blind, wilfully ignorant to the reality of indigenous people in this society. But we will challenge them."

Winnipeg Police Chief Devon Clunis, who is black, said he doesn't believe Winnipeg is the only city grappling with racism. Racism exists across Canada and is part of the "human condition," he suggested.

"We need to have a difficult conversation in our city respective of race," Clunis said. "I think you are seeing who is starting that conversation today." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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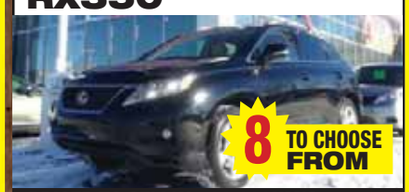

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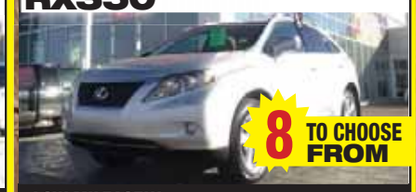

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Medical concern delays Saudi blogger's flogging

Free speech. Raif Badawi, whose wife fled to Canada in 2012, was imprisoned over posts on his liberal-minded blog

Authorities in Saudi Arabia have postponed the flogging of blogger Raif Badawi for medical reasons, a spokeswoman for the family said Thursday.

Elham Manea told The Canadian Press that local doctors in Jiddah determined Badawi could not withstand the 50 lashes scheduled for Friday.

She added that Badawi's punishment won't likely go ahead for several weeks.

"We are very cautious," Manea said in an interview from Switzerland. "We are very glad to hear this, but at the same time, we are very cautious. We are very worried that, nevertheless, things will change in Saudi Arabia."

Ensaf Haidar, wife of Raif Badawi, at a rally for his freedom in Montreal. RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Badawi was sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison for writing on a liberal blog he founded. He was also fined more than $300,000.

The 32-year-old father of three received the first 50 lashes on Jan. 9, but his second set of lashes was postponed last week for medical reasons.

The lashes were scheduled to be doled out over 20 weeks.

"Instead of continuing to torment Raif Badawi by dragging out his ordeal with repeated assessments the authorities should publicly announce an end to his flogging and release him immediately and unconditionally," Amnesty International's Said Boumedouha said in a statement.

Badawi is not a Canadian citizen but his wife and three children fled Saudi Arabia in 2012 and settled in Sherbrooke, Que., in 2013.

Protest vigils have been held across Quebec, and in dozens of countries around the world, in solidarity with Badawi.

NDP leader Tom Mulcair sent a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper last week, asking him to speak out in support of the jailed blogger.

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said "Canada is deeply concerned" by Badawi's punishment, which he described as "a violation of human dignity and freedom of expression."

"While Mr. Badawi is not a Canadian citizen, we will continue to make our position known, both publicly and through diplomatic channels," Baird said in a statement.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Refugee claims

Federal project won't be renewed

A government pilot project that essentially paid failed refugee claimants to leave Canada won't be renewed after an internal review. The program was supposed to save time and money when it came to getting failed refugee claimants out of the country, but appears to have done neither. The project gave failed claimants between $500 and $2,000 in exchange for their voluntary departure from Canada. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Regina, Sask.

Girl, 3, left on bus, has nightmares

A Regina mother says her three-year-old daughter, who was left alone for four hours strapped into a daycare minibus, is now suffering from nightmares. Destiny Stonechild says her child, Sequiona, wakes up screaming every night since the incident occurred.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Health. Canadians caring for ill family more stressed

Canadians caring for chronically ill older relatives are stressed out at a time when an aging population means more people will require such care, says a new report by the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

The report, released Thursday, also found that suicide rates are higher here than in some other developed nations.

Among those 15 and over who provide care to a family member with a long-term health condition, the report found almost 17 per cent reported higher levels of stress.

The problem is expected to worsen due to increasing rates of dementia and other chronic illnesses, which is why caregiving is among four of 13 mental-health indicators deemed areas of "significant concern" by the commission.

So too are suicide rates, intentional self-harm among college students and mental health recovery.

Nearly 20 per cent of university students said they had engaged in self-harm, the study found.

2011 stats

3,728

The commission found that 3,728 Canadians— about 11 out of every 100,000 — killed themselves. The suicide rate, while stable over time, is higher than in some other G8 countries.

"There are known strategies that work to prevent suicide; other countries are doing it, like the United Kingdom," Jennifer Vornbrock, a commission official, told a news conference.

Canada should follow suit and invest in suicide prevention, she said.

Vornbrock said she hopes the report will underline the need to take mental health more seriously.

The federal government created the Mental Health Commission of Canada in 2007. The organization, funded by Health Canada, operates at arm's length and has a 10-year mandate.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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World's oldest monarch dies

The king is dead. Saudi Arabia's Abdullah was key U.S. ally in the Middle East

Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, the powerful U.S. ally who joined Washington's fight against al-Qaida and sought to modernize the ultraconservative Muslim kingdom with incremental but significant reforms, including nudging open greater opportunities for women, has died, according to Saudi state TV. He was 90.

More than his guarded and hidebound predecessors, Abdullah assertively threw his oil-rich nation's weight behind trying to shape the Middle East. His priority was to counter the influence of rival, mainly Shiite Iran wherever it tried to make advances. He and fellow Sunni Arab monarchs also staunchly opposed the Middle East's wave of pro-democracy uprisings, seeing them as a threat to stability and their own rule.

He backed Sunni Muslim factions against Tehran's allies in several countries, but in Lebanon for example, the policy failed to stop Iranian-backed Hezbollah from gaining the upper hand. And Tehran and Riyadh's colliding ambitions stoked proxy conflicts around the region that enflamed Sunni-Shiite hatred — most horrifically in Syria's civil war, where the two countries backed opposing sides. Those conflicts in turn hiked Sunni militancy that returned to threaten Saudi Arabia.

And while the king maintained the historically close alliance with Washington, there were frictions as he sought to put those relations on Saudi Arabia's terms. He was constantly frustrated by Washington's failure to broker a settlement to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. He also pushed the Obama administration to take a tougher stand against Iran and to more strongly back the mainly Sunni rebels fighting to overthrow Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Abdullah's death was announced on Saudi state TV, saying the king died after midnight on Friday. His successor is his 79-year-old half-brother, Prince Salman, who had recently taken on the ailing Abdullah's responsibilities, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Abdullah became de facto ruler in 1995 when a stroke incapacitated his half-brother King Fahd. Abdullah was believed to have long rankled at the closeness of the alliance with the United States and as regent he pressed Washington to withdraw the troops it had deployed in the kingdom since the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The U.S. finally did so in 2003.

In 2000, Abdullah convinced the Arab League to approve an unprecedented offer that all Arab states would agree to peace with Israel if it withdrew from lands it captured in 1967.

The next year, he sent his ambassador in Washington to tell the Bush administration that it was too unquestioningly biased in favour of Israel and that the kingdom would from now on pursue its own interests apart from Washington's. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

King Abdullah

- Abdullah was born in Riyadh in 1924, one of the dozens of sons of Saudi Arabia's founder, King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud.
- Like all Abdul-Aziz's sons, Abdullah had only rudimentary education.
- Abdullah had more than 30 children from around a dozen wives.

Video. Police shooting of black man raises questions

A police video of officers confronting and then fatally shooting a black man in southern New Jersey has raised questions and stirred anger over another death at the hands of police.

The video of the Dec. 30 killing of Jerame Reid in Bridgeton, a struggling, mostly minority city of 25,000 people about 40 miles south of Philadelphia, was released this week.

Conrad Benedetto, a Philadelphia lawyer, said he has been hired by Reid's wife. He said in a statement the footage "raises serious questions as to the legality and/or reasonableness of the officers' actions that night" because Reid was shot as he raised his hands.

With the dashboard camera in their cruiser rolling, police pulled a Jaguar over for running a stop sign on a dark night. But things suddenly turned tense when one of the officers warned his partner that he could see a gun in the glove compartment.

Screaming over and over "Don't you f—ing move!" and "Show me your hands!" at the man in the passenger seat, the officer reached into the car and appeared to remove a silver handgun.

Then, the passenger, despite being warned repeatedly not to move, stepped out of the Jaguar, his hands raised about shoulder level.

The officers opened fire, killing him. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Community relations

2014 was a bad year for relations between police forces and black communities in the United States.

- **July 17.** Police choked 43-year-old Eric Garner to death in Staten Island, N.Y.
- **Aug. 9.** Police shot and killed 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.
- **Nov. 14.** Police shot and killed 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio.

Charlie Hebdo no hero to Afghan protesters

Afghans outside the French embassy in Kabul hold posters that read "I love Muhammad" during a protest Thursday against caricatures published in French magazine Charlie Hebdo. Around 100 people have demonstrated in the Afghan capital against Charlie Hebdo, accusing them of blasphemy.

RAHMAT GUL/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Disease

Measles hitting U.S. theme parks

A measles outbreak traced to Disney theme parks in California led to warnings against visiting the happiest place on Earth if tourists or their children have not been vaccinated against the highly contagious respiratory disease that has sickened 70 people.

People who have not received the measles-mumps-rubella, or MMR, vaccine are susceptible to contracting the highly contagious illness and should avoid Disney "for the time being," state epidemiologist Gil Chavez said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ISIL

Japan seeks hostage release

Japan scrambled Thursday for ways to secure the release of two hostages held by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group.

The militants threatened in a video message to kill the hostages within 72 hours unless they receive $200 million US. Based on the video's release time, that deadline would expire sometime Friday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Argentina

Death no suicide, president says

Argentine President Cristina Fernandez said Thursday she's "convinced" that prosecutor Alberto Nisman's death was not a suicide, raising more questions about the death of the man who had accused her of a cover-up in the nation's worst terrorist attack.

Fernandez' letter contrasts with one she wrote Monday in which she referred to his death as a suicide. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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N.J. fire displaces over 500

Firefighters hose down the apartment complex on Wednesday in Edgewater, New Jersey. JULIO CORTEZ/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Apartment complex. Despite significant destruction, only four people sustained injuries from the blaze

Officials are trying to determine what caused a fire that destroyed a four-storey New Jersey apartment building, displacing hundreds of people.

The fire continued to smoulder Thursday.

Edgewater Fire Chief Tom Jacobson said the fire appears to have started on the first floor of The Avalon at Edgewater.

He said flames quickly spread through the floors and walls of the wood structure along the Hudson River across from Manhattan.

Compliance

The fire chief said sprinklers were working and that the building complied with construction codes.

Firefighters had to rescue residents when they arrived Wednesday.

No one is missing, but the flames devoured 240 apartment units.

Edgewater Mayor Michael McPartland said approximately 500 residents were permanently displaced and approximately 520 were temporarily displaced from surrounding buildings.

Two civilians and two firefighters sustained minor injuries. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AirAsia. Six bodies found near crashed jetliner

Indonesian divers retrieved six more bodies on Thursday from waters around the sunken fuselage of the AirAsia jetliner that crashed last month.

Divers struggled with strong currents and poor visibility in an attempt to lift the fuselage and what appears to be the plane's cockpit from the seabed at a depth of 30 metres.

So far, 59 bodies have been recovered from AirAsia Flight 8501, which plunged into the Java Sea with 162 people on board while en route from Surabaya, Indonesia to Singapore. Officials believe the rest remain in the main fuselage.

National Transportation Safety Committee head Tatang Kurniadi ruled out sabotage on Wednesday, as investigators analyzed data from the aircraft's cockpit voice and flight data recorders with advisers from Airbus, the plane's manufacturer.

Transport Minister Ignasius Jonan told Parliament earlier this week that radar data showed that the plane was climbing at an abnormally high rate — about 6,000 feet a minute — then dropped rapidly and disappeared.

He did not say what caused the plane to climb so rapidly, but the pilots had asked to climb from 32,000 feet to 38,000 feet to avoid threatening clouds and were denied permission because of heavy air traffic.

A preliminary report on the accident is expected to be submitted to the International Civil Aviation Organization next week. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Investigators open the corpse of a poached rhino. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

South Africa. Record rhinos poached in 2014

A record 1,215 rhinos were poached in South Africa in 2014, the latest grim statistic in an increasingly desperate struggle to stem a surge in the killing of rhinos for their horns, officials said Thursday.

Edna Molewa, South Africa's environment minister, said the toll represented a 21 per cent increase over the previous year. South Africa is home to most of the world's rhinos.

International criminal syndicates are said to be involved in poaching rhinos, whose horn is worth a fortune on the illegal market in parts of Asia. Some Vietnamese and Chinese view the horn as a status symbol and a healing agent.

A wildlife trade monitoring network said the rhino poaching crisis is getting worse despite increased support for efforts to save the animals. The network, TRAFFIC, said corruption, institutional strife and delays in key prosecutions have undercut the campaign to protect rhinos. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Media

Jury fails to agree on verdict in trial of U.K. journalists

A British jury has failed to reach a verdict at the trial of four journalists from the tabloid Sun accused of bribing police and public officials for scoops.

Jurors announced Thursday after 49 hours of deliberations that they could not agree on verdicts against head of news Chris Pharo, ex-deputy news editor Ben O'Driscoll, reporter Jamie Pyatt and former managing editor Graham Dudman. Prosecutors said they would seek a retrial.

Many senior journalists from Rupert Murdoch-owned newspapers have been arrested as part of a sprawling probe into alleged tabloid wrongdoing. Several have been acquitted, including former Sun editor Rebekah Brooks.

The defendants denied all charges and claimed they were "fed to the wolves" by parent company News International.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Carlsberg developing wood fibre beer bottle

If you're a Carlsberg beer drinker, you might soon have to get used to toasting without that familiar "clink."

The alcohol giant announced Thursday that it is in the process of developing a biodegradable bottle made of wood fibres, meaning there won't be any sound when you touch bottles before throwing back a cold one.

Though the Green Fiber Bottle won't replace Carlsberg's aluminum or glass varieties, it could face criticism from diehard beer lovers who have become accustomed to the sound.

It's a problem Carlsberg faced when it introduced a polyethylene terephthalate bottle in Sweden, said the company's spokesman, Simon Hoffmeyer Boas.

Kenneth Wong, a marketing professor at Queen's University, said he's not sure how many brew lovers will be heartbroken over the clink, but "certainly it will be a factor." He noted that the bottle announcement came as companies are pouring their efforts into generating buzz and cultivating buyers to offset declines in beer sales.

The Green Fiber Bottle Project
Better World in the Making
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Carlsberg is using an infographic to promote its Green Fiber Bottle.
CONTRIBUTED

"This is one more turn of the wheel," Wong said. "Whether or not it works is another story."

Steve Beauchesne, CEO and co-founder of Beau's All Natural Brewing Co., a craft brewery in Vankleek Hill, Ont., said Carlsberg isn't the first to use innovative packaging materials that stretch beyond glass and aluminum. Beau's sells beer in ceramic bottles with a swing top and packages them in a wooden crate.

Beauchesne says companies are getting creative because "beer is not just about the liquid," but also the experience.

As for Carlsberg's effort, that'll be a three-year process. So far, only prototypes have been developed.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Mobile users wait for better battery

Smartphones. Companies offering workarounds for red-zone anxiety

At a watering hole in Brooklyn, bartender Kathy Conway counted four phone chargers behind the bar. Smartphone users, facing the scourge of the red zone, are tired of begging to charge devices behind bars or hunting for hidden electrical outlets in airports and train stations and are looking for a better battery.

While a better battery is a long way off, there are some options to ward off battery anxiety.

Companies displayed battery chargers and smartphone extenders at the annual gadget show known as CES. One that seems particularly convenient is the 911 Boost, developed by Florida entrepreneur Bernard Emano and his two firefighter sons. The small square weighs only 65 grams and is designed to be carried on a key chain. It's versatile, with three retractable jacks so it can plug into new and old model iPhones, and any phone that takes a micro-USB plug. The $30 US device can only provide about a 60 per cent charge for most phones, though a battery with more capacity would be too heavy for a keychain.

Chinese company ZeroLemon has a line of rugged smartphone cases for Apple, Samsung and LG phones that come with built-in battery extenders. A $69 US version for the iPhone 6, called the Rugged Juicer, will let you go up to three times as long before you need a recharge. ZeroLemon also makes pocket-sized, solar chargers that will restore a battery to full capacity in about three hours.

Travellers, like these at McCarran airport in Las Vegas, have to hunt to find a charging station as their power-hungry mobile devices put a strain on the common lithium-ion batteries. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Power hogs

The capacity of the common lithium-ion battery that powers laptops, cellphones and tablet computers has tripled since 1990. But that's not nearly enough to keep up with the demand gadget addicts have for constant use of skinny, light mobile devices that limit battery size.

- Two billion mobile phones were shipped worldwide in 2014, 75 per cent of which were smartphones. Demand is growing by 10 to 12 per cent each year.

Qualcomm has extended battery life through more efficient software and hardware: When one part of the chipset is in use, the rest gets turned off to save energy. The chipset also tries to store a lot of data internally so that it doesn't have to expend energy constantly reaching out to the phone's memory banks.

Google, whose Android operating system runs on most of the world's smartphones, last year launched Project Volta, a tool aimed at extending mobile battery life.

Waking up a phone's application processor, for example, can start consuming a lot of power, but a lot of apps don't need to do that constantly. A function called JobScheduler helps ensure that apps wait to perform non-critical tasks like updates when your phone is not connected to a power source.

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VOICES

FREE-RANGE SURE BEATS HELICOPTER

THE KOHLER REPORT
By Rebecca Kohler

A Winnipeg court will soon decide whether a mother is guilty of child abandonment after leaving her six-year-old son at home alone for 90 minutes while she did some errands. A guilty verdict would set a precedent and could mean leaving children alone would go from a common-sense no-no to absolutely illegal.

To me, six does seem a young age to be man-of-the-house for an hour and a half — when I was six, I wouldn't have left me in charge of Silly Putty, let alone a household — but then again, I've met precocious six-year-olds who seemed smarter than some of my ex-boyfriends.

And just over 100 years ago, children as young as four were working in factories to help with the family income. True, laws were created to stop that because it was dangerous and cruel, but if a four-year-old can sweep a chimney, maybe we don't give kids enough credit today.

You may have heard of a similar case in the news recently regarding Maryland, Va., parents Danielle and Alexander Meitiv, who let their 10- and six-year-old children walk a mile home alone from a park. A concerned citizen saw the unsupervised children and called police. The Meitivs are now under investigation for being negligent parents.

In interviews, the Meitivs come across as the opposite of negligent. They seem thoughtful and dedicated to giving their children the best possible childhood — the kind of childhood they had.

They're advocates of what's called "free-range parenting" and, though it sounds like they're raising chickens, the movement is actually about raising your kids to be self-reliant and independent by letting them do things — like walk home from the park — by themselves.

Free-range parenting makes a lot of sense to me, as I wonder if news stories and crime shows about abductions have people paralyzed with what might be an irrational fear.

As Danielle Meitiv put it during an interview on the Today Show, these days maybe we're "overestimating the danger and underestimating our children."

If you're any older than 30, I'll bet you got away with a lot more than kids do today.

Overstating the risk

Free-range parenting makes a lot of sense to me, as I wonder if news stories and crime shows about abductions have people paralyzed with what might be an irrational fear.

I was biking around my neighbourhood at 10 — no helmet, as helmets were for nerds only — I walked to the corner store for Popsicles, played with friends at the park.

Looking back, I don't see my parents as negligent. I thank them for giving me the space to learn for myself that roller-skating down a hill is not a great idea.

It's not clear whether the Winnipeg mother identifies as a "free-ranger" or was just trying to make do in a busy life, as not a lot of information has been released about her.

What has been reported is that her son is now living with his father and she hasn't seen him in 18 months, which seems extreme.

Maybe there's more to the story: maybe she's known to be irresponsible with her son, maybe she considers Play-Doh a food group and maybe the way the courts are treating her is based on more than just this one incident. Or maybe they're being helicopter courts?

Danielle Meitiv also pointed out that letting her kids walk home from the park is not only good for their health in terms of exercise, but the No. 1 cause of childhood death is car accidents. In her mind, having them walk home alone is actually safer than driving them.

This might sound like hippy-dippy bologna to you, but statistically speaking, she's right — I checked.

So if it's the safety of the children we're all concerned about, and we look at the statistics, maybe every parent that drives their kids places should be investigated for negligence?

Or maybe today we're not giving the children or the parents enough credit.

Rebecca Kohler is a stand-up comic, writer, actor, gymnast, lawyer and chemist. (Some of this isn't true.)
Follow her on Twitter @becca_kohler

Happy face/Sad face

From intellectual garden gnomes to dancing wee-wees and hoohas, Metro weighs in on the news that made headlines this week:

CRAZED HOCKEY PARENTS

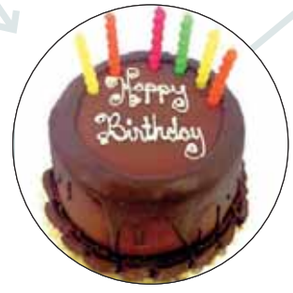
Parents on Vancouver Island have gotten a one-game suspension and a stern warning from the local hockey association. Parents were told in a letter that if they don't stop their "vindictiveness" toward youth refs, they'll be banned from watching any games. The verbal abuse has apparently gotten so bad that some of refs have taken to hiding in the change rooms. Look: when teenagers are locking themselves up to get away from you (and these teenagers are not your own kids), you have a problem.

GNOME CHOMSKY

Thanks to Just Say Gnome sculptor Steve Herrington and the Internet, you can now have your very own Noam Chomsky garden gnome to proudly display on your lawn. The miniature statues have been around for more than a decade, but due to the mysterious magic of the Internet, they've suddenly become popular enough to be on the radar of this national newspaper and we can tell you about them.

BIRTHDAY PARTY DRAMA MOMMA

This week in passive-aggressive parenting: a woman in England sent five-year-old Alex home with a £15 invoice after he failed to show up to her son's birthday party. When Alex's father refused to pay the bill, Jennifer Lawrence allegedly threatened to take him to small-claims court. This woman seems like she should take a lesson or two from her more famous namesake on the art of being chill. Grab a slice of leftover cake and try to relax.



DANCING GENITALS GO VIRAL

The Swedes do it again, crafting yet another near-perfect pop tune. Instant classic Snoppen Och Snippan is aimed at kids and performed by cartoon genitals, who sing about how great private parts are. While a few parents complained they didn't think the song was age-appropriate, others thought the song reinforces stereotypes about boys and girls. We say it's hard to think about gender politics while listening to a tune this catchy. Snippe-dippe snippetty snop!

CONFESSIONS OF A LAZY MAILMAN

Sometimes "going postal" just means feeling sluggish enough that you end up not doing your job very well. A former U.S. Postal Service worker pleaded guilty this week for failing to deliver close to 1,000 pieces of mail. Twenty-seven-year-old Alex Douma explained to investigators that he "just got lazy." Not cool, Douma, but we value your honesty!

metro

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Depp's rebel days are long gone

Mortdecai. New role as a bumbling British art dealer is the latest in a string of box-office -friendly characters that are damaging his rep as an edgy actor

Johnny Depp plays a shady, moustachioed art dealer in Mortdecai. CONTRIBUTED

In Focus

RICHARD CROUSE

There are dozens of biographies on Johnny Depp and a surprising amount of them use the word "rebel" in the title. There's the Passionate Rebel, the Modern Rebel and even Hollywood's Best-Loved Rebel.

There can be no argument that Depp is a fearless actor, unafraid to tackle tough, challenging roles, but it's hard to accept the rebel title these days. For 20 years, he wildly threw darts at the wall, making exciting movies with interesting directors.

With Tim Burton, he created the off-kilter Eds — Wood and Scissorhands. With John Waters, he produced Wade Walker, the greaser love interest in Crybaby. And, with Lasse Hallström, he came up with Gilbert Grape, caregiver to his brother and morbidly obese mother.

Along the way, he was also Hunter S. Thompson in Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, the world's most successful drug dealer in Blow, and the depraved poet at the dark heart of The Libertine.

Few actors could have pulled off Ed Wood and no one does debauched like Johnny, but the carefully cultivated hip outsider image was never truly accurate.

Shrouded in a cloud of Gauloise smoke, he was one of Hollywood's too-cool-for-school kids, emitting an outsider's aura, while astutely playing the Hollywood game.

But any remaining traces of Depp's bohemian status were wiped away with Captain Jack Sparrow's colourful scarves in the tetralogy of Pirates of the Caribbean movies. They made him a superstar, and wealthy enough to buy Bahamian islands, but also ushered in the damaging wig and makeup era of his career.

The pale makeup of Dark Shadows, Alice in Wonderland's crazy oversized hat, and the raven headdress of The Lone Ranger overshadowed Depp's performances, obscuring his character work with props and flash.

This weekend, he hides behind a moustache in the comedy Mortdecai.

As the title character, he's pompous, bumbling — imagine Inspector Clouseau with an English accent and an attitude — and on a worldwide hunt for a painting said to contain the code to a lost bank account.

Will people be attracted to Mortdecai? Hard to know. Depp's showy performances have, by-and-large, garnered big box office but profitability, while important to the suits who green light projects like this, is exactly what's killing Depp's credibility as a serious actor.

He's not in Nicolas Cage territory yet — there's an actor whose Western Kabuki style of acting redefines idiosyncratic — but with Pirates of the Caribbean 5 coming soon, perhaps it's time to put Depp's rebel actor image or reliance on props to bed.

Richard's ratings

Here Metro curates some quick Crouse takes on films currently unspooling at theatres across the country.

Still Alice

Strange Magic

Cake

The Humbling

The Boy Next Door

There were no press screenings for Mortdecai, so there is no rating from Richard. See inside for early reviews from Rotten Tomatoes.

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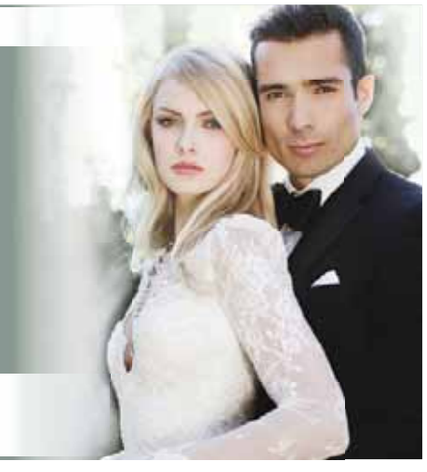

Slow West was Sundance's first sale, selling even before the film festival started. CONTRIBUTED

James Franco, left, is an ex-gay Christian pastor in I Am Michael. CONTRIBUTED

Greta Gerwig, left, co-wrote and stars in Mistress America. CONTRIBUTED

10 Sundance hopefuls to watch for

Film festival. If you're wondering why Robert Redford's indie showcase still matters, check out these contenders

NED EHRBAR
Metro in Hollywood

If this year's Oscar nominations are any indication, talk of the Sundance Film Festival's waning relevance is shockingly premature. Two films that stood out in Park City last year — Boyhood and Whiplash — are two of the stronger Academy Award front-runners this year. So with a whole new crop of hopeful Sundance darlings ready to premiere, here's a look at some of the titles we're most excited about.

1. Stanford Prison Experiment
It's honestly surprising it's taken this long for this story — about one of the most infamous psychological studies in history — to make it to the screen. Kyle Patrick Alvarez (C.O.G.) directs an impressive cast including Ezra Miller, Billy Crudup, Tye Sheridan, James Wolk and Michael Angarano.

2. I Am Michael
If you see only one James Franco movie at Sundance this year — and, as usual, there are multiple — see this one. Franco stars in director Justin Kelly's real-life drama as Michael Glatze, a gay activist who becomes an ex-gay Christian pastor.

3. Slow West
The Sundance's first sale of the year has already happened, even before the festival started. Kodi Smit-McPhee (The Road) stars alongside Michael Fassbender and Ben Mendelsohn in this 19th century frontier drama about a young man searching for the woman he loves with some interesting company along for the ride.

4. Z for Zachariah
Compliance director Craig Zobel follows up that lightning rod of a film with the story of a love triangle — that just so happens to involve the three last people on earth in a post-apocalyptic future. Oh, and those three people happen to be Chiwetel Ejiofor, Chris Pine and Margot Robbie. Humanity could do worse.

5. People, Places, Things
There are plenty of examples this year of comic performers turning to Sundance films for a chance to stretch — including two by festival regular Kristen Wiig, plus Sarah Silverman in I Smile Back — but the most intriguing is Flight of the Conchords star Jemaine Clement taking on the role of a widower with two young daughters.

Stanford Prison Experiment. CONTRIBUTED

6. Last Days in the Desert
Since the list of things Ewan McGregor hasn't done yet in his eclectic acting career apparently included playing Jesus Christ and the Devil, he decided to knock them both out with one movie, chronicling Christ's 40-day exile and temptation. Yes, it's ground that's been covered on film before, but it's intriguing nonetheless.

7. Mistress America
Noah Baumbach and his girlfriend/star/co-writer/muse, Greta Gerwig look to recapture some of that Frances Ha magic with another story of young women in New York. Sounds like a plan.

8. End of the Tour
Director James Ponsoldt follows up The Spectacular Now with this retelling of the five-day-long interview between David Foster Wallace (Jason Segel) and Rolling Stone reporter David Lipsky (Jesse Eisenberg). This could be catnip for the NPR crowd.

9. A Walk in the Woods
It kind of seems like cheating for festival founder Robert Redford to appear in a film at Sundance, but it's probably best to not ignore him. Redford and Nick Nolte co-star as aging pals hiking the Appalachian Trail in this film, which kicks off the festival as the opening night gala.

10. Going Clear
There are also a ton of interesting documentaries, but if you only have time for one, make it Alex Gibney's already controversial Scientology take-down, featuring eight not-so-happy former Church members.

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Ratings: *Certified Fresh:* *Fresh:* *Rotten:* *Audience response:* *Audience anticipation for the film:* +

Mystery

The Boy Next Door

Director. Neill Fearnley, Rob Cohen

Stars. Jennifer Lopez, Ryan Guzman

Jennifer Lopez leads the cast in The Boy Next Door, a psychological thriller that explores a forbidden attraction that goes much too far. Directed by Rob Cohen (The Fast and the Furious) and written by Barbara Curry, the film also stars Ryan Guzman, John Corbett and Kristin Chenoweth.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 29% **Audience:** + 90%

Animation

Strange Magic

Director. Gary Rydstrom

Strange Magic is a madcap fairy tale musical inspired by A Midsummer Night's Dream. Popular songs from the past six decades help tell the tale of a colorful cast of goblins, elves, fairies and imps, and their hilarious misadventures sparked by the battle over a powerful potion.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 13% **Audience:** + 85%

Action

Mortdecai

Director. David Koepp

Stars. Johnny Depp, Gwyneth Paltrow

Juggling some angry Russians, the British Mi5, his impossibly leggy wife and an international terrorist, debonair art dealer and part time rogue Charlie Mortdecai (Johnny Depp) must traverse the globe armed only with his good looks and special charm in a race to recover a stolen painting rumored to contain the code to a lost bank account filled with Nazi gold.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 9% **Audience:** + 92%

Comedy

The Wedding Ringer

Director. Jeremy Garelick

Stars. Josh Gad, Kevin Hart

Doug Harris (Josh Gad) is a lovable but socially awkward groom-to-be with a problem: He has no best man. With less than two weeks to go until he marries the girl of his dreams (Kaley Cuoco-Sweeting), Doug is referred to Jimmy Callahan (Kevin Hart), owner and CEO of Best Man, Inc., a company that provides flattering best men for socially challenged guys in need. What ensues is a hilarious wedding charade.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 33% **Audience:** 77%

Drama

The Humbling

Director. Barry Levinson

Stars. Al Pacino, Greta Gerwig

Over-the-hill stage actor Simon Axler struggles to find his passion for life again. Near his breaking point, he finds motivation in the form of a young and lustful lesbian Pegeen Stapleford, but as their relationship heats up Simon has a hard time keeping up with the youthful Pegeen.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 56% **Audience:** + 64%

Drama

Escobar: Paradise Lost

Director. Andrea Di Stefano

Stars. Benicio Del Toro, Josh Hutcherson

For Pablo Escobar (Benicio Del Toro), family is everything. When young surfer Nick (Josh Hutcherson) falls for Escobar's niece, he finds his life on the line when he's pulled into the dangerous world of the family business.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 50% **Audience:** + 88%

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Comedy

Nicolas Cage GETTY IMAGES

Nicolas Cage to go after Bin Laden in Army of One

Actor Nicolas Cage has joined the latest comedy from Borat director Larry Charles, The Hollywood Reporter indicates. Army of One is inspired by an article published in GQ on one American's attempts to go on a manhunt for the Al-Qaeda leader in Pakistan and Afghanistan. After a series of critical and commercial missteps, Nicolas Cage has decided to make his next film a satirical comedy, likely of the black humour variety. AFP

Script development

Write me up, Scotty: Simon Pegg will help pen Star Trek 3

Along with Dark Blue creator Doug Jung, British writer and actor Simon Pegg will co-author the script of the third movie in the Star Trek reboot, Deadline has revealed.

Though not exactly anticipated, Simon Pegg's arrival on the Star Trek 3 production team is not entirely surprising. A known fan of all things sci-fi, the writer and director of the 2005 zombie comedy Shaun of the Dead is a friend of J.J. Abrams, who directed the first two movies in the franchise, released in 2009 and 2013. Pegg also appeared in both as Scotty, a role he is set to reprise in the third movie. AFP

Sniper targets conservative crowd

Marketing. Iraq War drama has brought in a demographic that movies seldom cater to

Empty seats were hard to come by at Clint Eastwood's American Sniper over the U.S. holiday weekend, where the R-rated Iraq War drama — all words seldom attached to "blockbuster" — rolled to the kind of runaway success that makes Hollywood sit up and take notice.

The film, which blew away box-office expectations with a superhero-sized $107 million US over the four-day weekend, was in many ways an old-fashioned kind of Hollywood hit: It was built on star-power (Bradley Cooper and Eastwood), Oscar buzz (6 nominations including best picture) and a largely adult audience (63 per cent over 25 years old).

The success has made the latest film from the 84-year-old director (his second in half a year) a flashpoint in Hollywood, Washington D.C. and everywhere in between, sweeping American Sniper into the culture wars Eastwood has sometimes engaged.

Bradley Cooper in a scene from American Sniper. CONTRIBUTED

Certainly, the wide-release opening wouldn't have been possible without the strong support of a seldom-catered-to demographic: conservatives. Dan Fellman, head of domestic distribution for Warner Bros., called conservatives' embrace of the film "huge," noting it's an audience difficult to court.

"The audience watched this movie not as a war movie but as a movie about patriotism, a movie about a hero, a movie about family, a movie about serving our country," said Fellman. "And it struck a chord right across the board."

Most Hollywood heartland hits (like the recent Unbroken, or one of films American Sniper surpassed to become the biggest R-rated drama debut, The Last Temptation of Christ) have capitalized on faith-based audiences. But American Sniper, about Navy SEAL marksman Chris Kyle, is the kind of heroic war film Hollywood has largely resisted depicting because of the often unpopular and less successful campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Gitesh Pandya, editor of BoxOfficeGuru.com, credited the film's triumph to a "perfect storm" of factors, including the savvy marketing of Warner Bros., which stoked interest in the film by holding it in very limited release for two weeks.

"It was always expected to have a large conservative base come out for this film, as most military dramas do," said Pandya. "But you can't sell a movie to only a conservative audience and reach $107 million in a four-day weekend. You're reaching everybody with those kind of numbers."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Best picture box-office

- American Sniper will arrive at the Feb. 22 Academy Awards the far-and-away box-office heavyweight among the best-picture nominees.
- Second to American Sniper is The Grand Budapest Hotel, which made $59.1 million US in its entire run. And Eastwood's film dramatically stole the thunder of Selma ($11.5 million US in its second week of wide-release) on the very memorial day of its protagonist, Martin Luther King Jr.

Still Alice captures off-screen bond between stars

Chemistry. Kristen Stewart and Julianne Moore have been close for years, so playing mother and daughter was not a stretch

Kristen Stewart didn't need to stretch herself into actorly knots to feel a familial bond with Julianne Moore in Still Alice.

She had known Moore, who became a five-time Oscar nominee with her recent nod for Alice, since her first starring role in 2004's Catch That Kid, which was directed by Moore's husband Bart Freundlich. That shoot was "very much a family affair," Stewart says, and she grew close enough to Moore that acting as her daughter in Still Alice felt almost too easy.

"It's hard to take credit for anything ... because I like her, and because we get along and we understand each other — and that was captured," Stewart

"As an actor ... you can't work with everyone, to be honest with you. The reason things affect an audience ... is because an emotion and energy like that is contagious, so if you're faking it, people know it.

"For a project that's so ambitious and so intimidating," she added, "I needed to know I would help and support her rather than take away from what she's doing."

Kristen Stewart, left, and Julianne Moore in Still Alice. CONTRIBUTED

In the disquieting drama, Moore portrays a renowned linguistics professor whose charmed life is brought to abrupt ruin with the diagnosis of early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Rapidly, the astute academic begins vanishing into the mysterious condition while her husband (Alec Baldwin) and three grown children stand by in helpless terror.

As aspiring actress Lydia, the 24-year-old Stewart portrays a character who is both at odds with her mother (over the daughter's refusal to go to college) and yet her closest confidante. She's the only family member brave enough to face her mother's deteriorating state head-on.

Stewart, so closely associated with the blockbuster Twilight film franchise, has won critical regard for her Still Alice performance. The New York Times praised her "excellent work" in the film, and the L.A. Times concluded that the film "wouldn't be nearly as emotionally effective as it is" without Stewart's presence.

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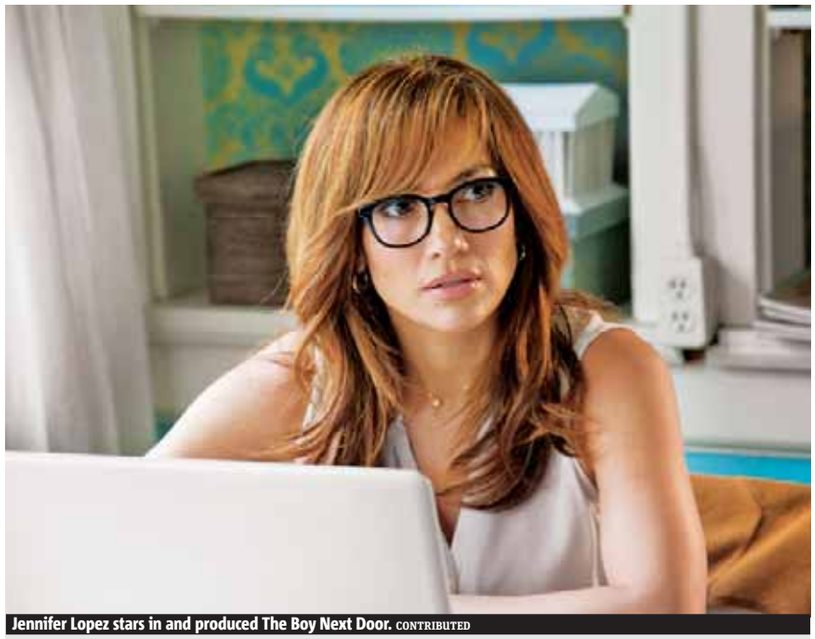

Jennifer Lopez stars in and produced The Boy Next Door. CONTRIBUTED

Pushing boundaries empowers Lopez

Movie feature. Steamy new thriller challenges J-Lo's skills as an actress and as an independent producer

NED EHRBAR
Metro in Hollywood

Jennifer Lopez would be having a lot more fun making a rom-com, but then work can't always be fun, can it?

Her latest film, the steamy thriller The Boy Next Door, is pretty far from lighter fare like The Wedding Planner or The Back-Up Plan.

Lopez stars as an English teacher who succumbs to the advances of her neighbour's comely young nephew (Ryan Guzman). As you can imagine, it doesn't go well from there.

Now, back to that fun factor part of the job.

"I prefer romantic comedies. They're just fun. That's a fun set," Lopez admits. "You're just seeing how silly you can make things. They're romantic, and I'm a hopeless romantic, as well. So I really enjoy doing that kind of stuff."

But she insists she also likes to push herself.

"Being more dramatic or being more tough or being more vulnerable, it's all the same. It's all about trying to find the reality in the moment, making it real. All of a sudden, I have this high-pitched scream that I've never heard myself do, and that's when I know I'm tapping into something real."

Another challenge with her Boy Next Door role was the extremely intimate sex scene that sets the craziness of the plot in motion — and required some bold, revealing work on Lopez's part.

"Scenes like that are always uncomfortable," she says. "It's a very vulnerable position to be in. It's not something you ever get used to as an actress, I don't think.

"But this was a very important scene in the film. If that scene didn't work, the rest of the film doesn't work, because that's the moment they share together. If it wasn't intense, passionate, real enough, then the rest of the movie doesn't make any sense."

Acting challenges aside, the movie also taught Lopez some lessons as a producer, particularly in the new rules of financing and independent filmmaking.

"We got it made on a micro-budget of $4 million in 25 days," she reveals. "It was super-intense. I had never done a film like that in my career. But it was very liberating as an artist because it made me realize I can make whatever movie I want like this. It's the material that really matters. 'Do I feel like doing this at this time?' and not waiting for a big studio to green-light something or hire you as an actress. It really is very empowering."

So is that why she was absent from the big screen in 2014? Not quite.

"For me, it's just about what feels right at the time, and I was very in music land last year," she explains. "I'm always thinking about all of it, and then certain things take precedent at different times."

The cute boy next door

So how much does art imitate life for Lopez?

"Actually, my first boyfriend was the boy next door, when I was like 13 or 14 years old. It was the summer I turned 14. He was cute. Cute enough, I guess, at the time."

But he didn't become a deranged stalker?

"I've had people kind of obsessed with me, but not like obsessed in a dangerous, scary way. No, thank God. I've never had to deal with anything like that."

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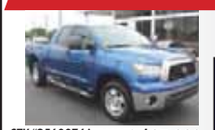

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The Boxtrolls (PG) Fri-Thu 1:30-3:50
Dumb and Dumber To (PG) Fri-Thu 4:05
Foxcatcher (PG) Fri-Thu 12:55-4-6:55-9:40
Fury (14A) Fri-Thu 1-6:55-9:40
Gone Girl (18A) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:45-8
Horrible Bosses 2 (14A) Fri-Thu 4:10-7:30-9:55 ; Inherent Vice (18A) Fri-Thu 3:40-9
The Interview (14A) Fri-Thu 1:15-4:20-7:30-10 ; John Wick (14A) Fri-Thu 1:35-9:35
St. Vincent (PG) Fri-Thu 1:05-4:25-7:25-9:50
Whiplash (14A) Fri-Thu 7:10-9:45

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American Sniper (14A) Fri-Sun 12:55-4:10-7:20-10:25 Mon-Thu 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:25
Big Hero 6 (G) Fri-Sun 1:15 Mon-Thu 1:35
Blackhat (14A) Fri-Sun 12:35-3:40-7:10-10:15 Mon-Wed 3:40-7:10-10:15 Thu 3:40
Bolshoi Ballet: Swan Lake (STC) Sun 12:55
The Boy Next Door (14A) Fri-Sun 12:45-3:05-5:25-7:45-10:05 Mon-Thu 3:05-5:25-7:45-10:05 ; Exhibition OnScreen: Girl With a Pearl Earring (STC) Wed 7:30
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (PG) Fri-Thu 3:15 ; 3D (PG) Fri-Sun 12:05-6:30-9:45 Mon-Thu 6:30-9:45 ; The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1 (PG) Fri-Thu 6:45-9:40
The Imitation Game (PG) Fri-Sun 1:20-4:20-7:05-10:10 Mon-Thu 1:45-4:35-7:20-10:10
Into the Woods (STC) Fri-Sun 4:05-7-10 Mon-Thu 4:10-7-10
Monster House (PG) Sat 11
Mortdecai (PG) Fri-Sun 2-4:40-7:30-10:15 Mon-Tue 2-4:40-7:40-10:20 Wed 4:40-7:40-10:20 Thu 2-4:40-7:40-10:20 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1:30
Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG) Fri-Sun 1:30-4 Mon-Thu 1:40-4:15
Paddington (G) Fri-Sun 12:20-2:45-5:10-7:35-9:55 Mon-Thu 2:45-5:10-7:35-9:55
Project Almanac (PG) Thu 7-9:35
Strange Magic (G) Fri-Sun 11:55-2:20-4:45-7:15-9:50 Mon-Tue 2:20-4:45-7:15-9:50 Wed 4:45-7:15-9:50 Thu 2:20-4:45-7:15-9:50
Star & Strollers Screening, Wed 1:30
Taken 3 (14A) Fri-Sat 2:15-5:05-7:50-10:30 Sun 5:05-7:50-10:30 Mon-Tue 2:10-4:50-7:50-10:30 Wed 2:10-4:50-10:30 Thu 2:10-4:50-7:50-10:30 ; The Wedding Ringer (14A) Fri-Sun 12-2:25-4:55-7:25-10:20 Mon-Thu 2:25-4:55-7:25-10:20

Landmark Cinemas 16
Country Hills, 388 Country Hills Blvd

American Sniper (14A) Fri 12-3-6:30-9:30 Sat-Sun 10:55-12-3-6:30-9:30 Mon-Thu 3-6:30-9:30 ; American Sniper: The IMAX Experience (14A) Fri-Sun 1-4-7-10 Mon-Thu 4-7-10 ; Annie (G) Fri-Sun 12:10-3:10-6:10 Mon-Wed 3:10-6:10 Thu 3:10 ; Baby (STC) Fri 12-5-9 Sat 12-5 Sun 12-5-9 Mon-Thu 5-9 Sat 9 ; Blackhat (14A) Fri-Sat 12:20-3:20-6:40-9:45 Sun 12:30-3:20-6:40-9:45 Mon-Thu 3:20-6:40-9:45 ; The Boy Next Door (14A) Fri-Sun 12:50-3:50-7:45-10:15 Mon-Thu 3:50-7:45-10:15
Dolly Ki Doli (STC) Fri-Sun 2-6-9:20 Mon-Thu 6-9:20 ; The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (PG) Fri 3:45 Sat-Sun 10:55-3:45 Mon-Thu 3:45; 3D (PG) Fri-Sat 12:30-7:10-10:15 Sun-Thu 7:10-10:15 Sun 12:30
The Imitation Game (PG) Fri 1:10-4:20-7:15-9:55 Sat-Sun 10:45-1:10-4:20-7:15-9:55 Mon-Thu 4:20-7:15-9:55
Mortdecai (PG) Fri 1:50-4:30-7:20-9:55 Sat-Sun 10:40-1:50-4:30-7:20-9:55 Mon-Thu 4:30-7:20-9:55 ; Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG) Fri-Sun 1:30 Sat-Sun 10:35
Paddington (G) Fri 12:40-3:30-6:20-9:10 Sat 12:50 Sun 10:30-12:40-3:30-6:20-9:10 Mon-Thu 3:30-6:20-9:10 Sat 10:30-3:30-6:20-9:10
Project Almanac (PG) Thu 7-9:40
The Royal Ballet - Manon (STC) Mon 6:30
Royal Ballet: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (STC) Sat 11
Selma (PG) Fri-Sun 12:45-3:40-6:45-9:40 Mon 3:40-9:45 Tue-Thu 3:40-6:45-9:40
Strange Magic (G) Fri 4:10-6:50-9:25 Sat-Sun 10:50-1:40-4:10-6:50-9:25 Mon-Thu 4:10-6:50-9:25 Fri 1:40
Taken 3 (14A) Fri-Thu 4:40-7:30-10:10
Unbroken (PG) Fri-Wed 9:35
The Wedding Ringer (14A) Fri-Sun 1:45-4:50-7:50-10:15 Mon-Thu 4:50-7:50-10:15 Wed 1 ; Wild (14A) Fri 1:20 Sun 1:20-4:05-7:40-10:15 Mon-Thu 4:05-7:40-10:15 Fri-Sat 4:05-7:40-10:15

Landmark Cinemas 10
Shawnessy & EXTRA
Calgarytudio, 100-16061 MacLeod Trail

American Sniper (14A) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:45-7:15-10:30
Blackhat (14A) Fri-Thu 3:20-9:40
The Boy Next Door (14A) Fri 1:30-10:10 Sat-Sun 11-1:30-4-7:40-10:10 Mon-Thu 1:30-4-7:40-10:10 Fri 4-7:40
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (PG) Fri-Thu 4:30 ; 3D (PG) Fri 12:45-8 Sat 8 Sun-Thu 12:45-8
The Imitation Game (PG) Fri-Sat 12:15-3:30-6:45-10 Sun-Mon 12:15-3:30-10 Tue-Thu 12:15-3:30-6:45-10
Into the Woods (STC) Fri-Thu 12-6:30
Mortdecai (PG) Fri-Mon 12:10-3:10-6:20-9:20 Tue 9:20 Wed-Thu 12:10-3:10-6:20-9:20 Tue 12:10-3:10-6:20
Paddington (G) Fri 1:15-4:15-7-9:50 Sat-Sun 10:30-1:15-4:15-7-9:50 Mon 1:15 Tue-Thu 1:15-4:15-7-9:50 Mon 4:15-7-9:50
Project Almanac (PG) Thu 10:15
The Royal Ballet - Manon (STC) Mon 6:30
Royal Ballet: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (STC) Sat 11
Strange Magic (G) Fri-Thu 1-4-6:50-9:30
Taken 3 (14A) Fri-Sun 1-4:20-7:30-10:15 Mon 1-3:45-10:15 Tue-Wed 1-4:20-7:30-10:15 Thu 1-4:20-7:30
The Wedding Ringer (14A) Fri 4:45-7:50-10:20 Sat 10:45 Sun 10:45-1:45-4:45-7:50-10:20 Mon 1:45 Tue-Thu 1:45-4:45-7:50-10:20 Fri 1:45 Sat 1:45-4:45-7:50-10:20 Mon 4:45-7:50-10:20

Scotiabank Chinook
6455 MacLeod Trail

American Sniper (14A) Fri 1:05-4:15-7:30-10:45 Mon-Tue 12:50-4:10-7:25-10:30 Thu 12:50-4:10-7:25-10:30
Annie (G) Fri 12:35-4:05-7:05-10:05 Mon-Tue 1:05-4:05-7:10-10:05 Thu 4:05 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1
Big Hero 6 (G) Fri 12:50 Mon-Tue 1:30 Thu 1:30 : 3D (G) Fri 4:30-7:10 Mon-Tue 4:25-7:10 Thu 4:25
Blackhat (14A) Fri 12:45-4-7:15-10:25 Mon-Tue 12:45-4-7:15-10:25 Thu 12:45-4-7:15-10:25
Bolshoi Ballet: Swan Lake (STC) Sun 12:55
The Boy Next Door (14A) Fri 12:55-3:15-5:35-8:05-10:30 Mon-Tue 1:45-5:20-7:45-10:15 Thu 1:45-4:30-7:45-10:15
Exhibition OnScreen: Girl With a Pearl Earring (STC) Wed 7:30
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (PG) Fri 5:30 Mon-Tue 5:35 Thu 5:35; An IMAX 3D Experience (PG) Fri 12:30-3:45-7-10:20 Mon-Tue 12:30-3:45-7-10:20 Thu 12:30-3:45-7-10:20
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies 3D (PG) Fri 9:40 Mon-Tue 9 Thu 9
The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1 (PG) Fri 12:40-4:25-7:35-10:30 Mon-Tue 1-4:20-7:30-10:25 Thu 1-4:20-10:25
The Imitation Game (PG) Fri 1:10-3:55-6:55-9:45 Mon-Tue 1:10-4:05-7-9:50 Thu 1:10-4:05-7-9:50
Interstellar (PG) Fri 1:25-5:25-9:55 Mon-Tue 1:25-5:25-9:45 Thu 1:25-5:25-9:45
Into the Woods (STC) Fri 1:20-4:20-7:20-10:25 Mon-Tue 12:55-4-7:05-10:05 Thu 12:55-4-7:05-10:05
Monster House (PG) Sat 11
Mortdecai (PG) Fri 2:15-5:05-7:55-10:35 Mon-Tue 2:15-5:05-7:45-10:30 Thu 2:15-5:05-7:45-10:30 ; Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG) Fri 12:15-3 Mon-Tue 12:35-3:05 Thu 12:35-3:05
Paddington (G) Fri 12:10-2:45-5:15-7:45-10:15 Mon-Tue 2-4:35-7:15-9:55 Thu 2-4:35-7:15-9:55
Project Almanac (PG) Thu 7-10
Selma (PG) Fri 12:20-3:40-6:50-9:50 Mon-Tue 1:05-4:15-7:20-10:25 Thu 1:05-4:15-7:20-10:25
Strange Magic (G) Fri 12-2:30-5-7:35-10:10 Mon-Tue 1:55-4:40-7:35-10:10 Thu 4:10-7:35-10:10 Star & Strollers Screening, Thu 1
Taken 3 (14A) Fri 12:55-4:10-8-10:40 Mon-Tue 1:40-4:45-7:40-10:20 Thu 1:40-4:45-7:40-10:20
Unbroken (PG) Fri 10 Mon-Tue 9:55 Thu 10:05 ; The Wedding Ringer (14A) Fri 12:05-2:40-5:10-7:50-10:35 Mon-Tue 2:15-5:10-7:40-10:15 Thu 2:15-5:10-7:40-10:15
WWE Royal Rumble - 2015 (STC) Sun 6

Sunridge Spectrum
2555 32nd Street

American Sniper (14A) Fri 1-4:05-7:10-10:15 Sat 10:45-1:45-4:45-7:45-10:45 Sun 1-4:05-7:10-10:15 Mon-Thu 1:05-4:05-7:10-10:10
Baby (STC) Fri 12:40-4:20-8 Sat 12:15-3:45-7:50 Sun 12:40-4:20-8 Mon-Thu 12:55-4:25-8
Blackhat (14A) Fri 12:30-3:35-6:40-9:50 Sat 12-3:15-7:05-10:15 Sun 12:30-3:35-6:40-9:50 Mon-Thu 2:20-6:40-9:50
The Boy Next Door (14A) Fri 12:35-2:55-5:15-7:40-10:10 Sat 11:45-2:05-4:25-7-9:35 Sun 12:35-2:55-5:15-7:40-10:10 Mon-Thu 2:30-4:55-7:40-10:05
Dolly Ki Doli (STC) Fri 1:40-4:15-7:20-10 Sat 12:25-2:55-6:15-8:50 Sun 1:40-4:15-7:20-10 Mon-Thu 1:40-4:15-7:20-9:55
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (PG) Fri 4:50 Sat 3:20 Sun-Thu 4:50; 3D (PG) Fri 1:35-8:10 Sat 12:05-6:35-9:55 Sun-Thu 1:35-8:10
I (14A) Fri 12:45-4:45-9 Sat 12:30-4:20-9 Sun 12:45-4:45-9 Mon-Thu 12:55-4:45-8:45
Into the Woods (STC) Fri 12:25-3:20-6:35-9:35 Sat 1:25-4:40-7:40-10:35 Sun 12:25-3:20-6:35-9:35 Mon-Thu 2:10-6:30-9:25
Monster House (PG) Sat 11
Mortdecai (PG) Fri 1:20-4-7-9:45 Sat 11-1:50-4:35-7:20-10:20 Sun 1:20-4-7-9:45 Mon-Thu 1:10-4-7-9:45
Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG) Fri 12:55-3:30-6:30-9:30 Sat 1:05-3:35-6:30-9:15 Sun 12:55-3:30-9:30 Mon-Wed 1:15-3:45-6:15-8:55 Thu 1:15-3:45
Paddington (G) Fri 1:50-4:25-6:55-9:20 Sat 11:35-2:10-4:55-7:25-9:50 Sun 1:50-4:25-6:55-9:20 Mon-Tue 1:30-4:10-6:45-9:10 Wed 4:10-6:45-9:10 Thu 1:30-4:10-6:45-9:10 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1:30
Project Almanac (PG) Thu 7:05-9:40
Strange Magic (G) Fri 12:50-3:25-6:20-8:55 Sat 11:30-2:15-4:50-7:30-10:10 Sun 12:50-3:25-6:20-8:55 Mon-Thu 1:20-3:50-6:20-8:50
Taken 3 (14A) Fri-Sun 1:10-3:50-6:50-9:40 Mon-Tue 1-3:55-6:50-9:35 Wed 3:55-6:50-9:35 Thu 1-3:55-6:50-9:35 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
The Wedding Ringer (14A) Fri 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:05 Sat 1:30-4:30-7:10-10:05 Sun 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:05 Mon-Thu 2-4:30-7:30-10
WWE Royal Rumble - 2015 (STC) Sun 6

Westhills 10
165 Stewart Green

American Sniper (14A) Fri-Sun 12:40-3:50-7:15-10:25 Mon-Thu 6-9:15
Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) (14A) Fri-Sun 12:55-3:55-7:30-10:30 Mon-Thu 5:30-8:30
Blackhat (14A) Fri-Sun 12:50-4:10-7:20-10:20 Mon-Thu 5:45-9
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (PG) Fri-Sun 3:40 Mon-Thu 4:25 3D (PG) Fri-Sun 12:20-7-10:15 Mon-Thu 8
The Imitation Game (PG) Fri-Sun 12:45-3:45-6:45-9:45 Mon-Thu 4-6:40-9:20
Into the Woods (STC) Fri-Sun 1-4:05-7:05-10:05 Mon-Thu 5-8:10
Mortdecai (PG) Fri-Sun 12:35-3:35-6:50-10 Mon-Thu 4:15-6:55-9:30
Paddington (G) Fri-Sun 12:30-3-6:30-9:15 Mon-Thu 4:05-6:30-8:55
Selma (PG) Fri-Sun 12:25-3:30-6:40-9:50 Mon-Thu 4:40-8:20
Taken 3 (14A) Fri-Sun 1:10-4-7:25-10:10 Mon-Thu 4:10-6:45-9:25

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Katy Perry racks up billions of YouTube views

If you were watching anything music-related on YouTube last year, there's a good chance it was Katy Perry. Her channel was the most-watched on the video site among musicians, pulling in nearly 2.4 billion views last year. Yes, billion. She was also the third-most watched channel over-all across the site.

So this whole Super Bowl halftime thing totally makes sense. Three of her videos alone — Dark Horse, This Is How We Do and Birthday — were responsible for 1.2 billion of those views. Yikes. Don't kids listen to mp3s anymore?

Katy Perry

Superhero stars make Marvelous Super Bowl bet

Chris Evans, left, and Chris Pratt

Two of the Marvel cinematic universe's reigning heroes named Chris, Captain America star Chris Evans and Guardians of the Galaxy star Chris Pratt, have taken their hometown pride and NFL rivalry and turned it into something positive. Boston native and Patriots fan Evans started the taunting off by pointing out that he and Washington state-bred Pratt would have to be enemies for the next two weeks, but the smack talk quickly evolved into a rather noble bet. "Seahawks win, you fly yourself to Seattle, visit [Seattle's Children's] hospital as Captain America, waving the 12th man flag," Pratt wagered, to which Evans replied, "I accept. And when the Patriots humiliate your sea-chickens, I expect Star-Lord to arrive at [Boston area children's cancer treatment center Christopher's Haven] in a Brady jersey."

Good on them. Of course, Pratt couldn't resist getting in one last very topical burn: "Humiliate my Seahawks? Maybe talk to Brady about deflating your expectations. BOOM!"

Gossip

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METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Selena Gomez gets last laugh when all is Zedd and done

This should do plenty to calm those pesky dating rumours plaguing Selena Gomez and Zedd. Gomez and the adorably elfin music producer have been working together, but rumors quickly started cropping up their partnership is a bit more personal than that. And the photo he posted to Instagram of Gomez in bed, in a bra, laughing during a FaceTime session with him is only fueling those rumours.

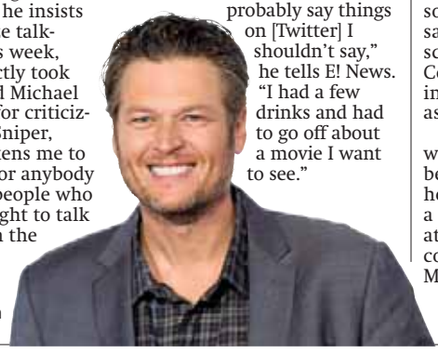
Now, I'll admit this is my first real introduction to Zedd, and while his name suggests he's some sort of Bizarro World foe that I must defeat, the fact that he's referencing the cult classic terrible, terrible movie The Room instantly makes me like him. The caption of the photo is an attempt at a phonetic reading of one of Tommy Wiseau's greetings — "Oh hi der-rling…" — and properly explains Gomez's laughter in the photo. Hey, maybe she has good taste after all.

Selena Gomez ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Regrets? Blake Shelton has a few after Twitter snipe

Celebrities are getting pretty vocal about what sickens them these days, but at least in The Voice judge Blake Shelton's case, he insists it was the booze talking. Earlier this week, Shelton indirectly took Seth Rogen and Michael Moore to task for criticizing American Sniper, tweeting, "Sickens me to see celebrities or anybody slam the very people who protect their right to talk s—" along with the hashtag "true cowards."

The thing about that, though, is he might have phrased it differently had he been sober. "Sometimes I probably say things on [Twitter] I shouldn't say," he tells E! News. "I had a few drinks and had to go off about a movie I want to see."

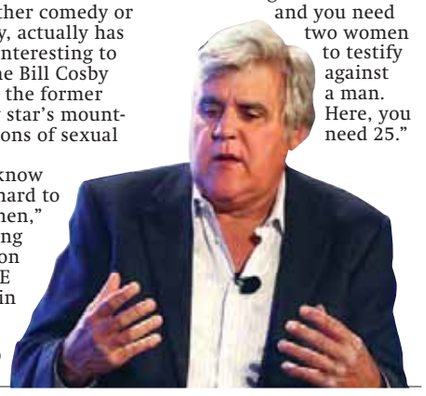


Blake Shelton

Leno sticks chin out. Sides with women not Cosby

Jay Leno, usually a bastion of playing it safe when it comes to either comedy or commentary, actually has something interesting to say about the Bill Cosby scandal and the former Cosby Show star's mounting accusations of sexual assault.

"I don't know why it's so hard to believe women," he said during a Q&A session at the NATPE conference in Miami this week, according to Variety. "You to go Saudi Arabia and you need two women to testify against a man. Here, you need 25."



Jay Leno

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Dessert. Cinnamon and Pecan Coffee Cake is a great companion for your next cup of joe

RICARDO COOKS
Chef Ricardo
Ricardo Magazine

This recipe serves 12. COURTESY RICARDOCUISINE.COM

Ingredients

Topping
- 1 1/2 cups (150 g) pecans, lightly toasted and finely chopped
- 1/2 cup (70 g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (105 g) sugar
- 1/2 cup (120 g) brown sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup (115 g) unsalted butter, softened

Cake
- 2 1/2 cups (350 g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup (170 g) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups (480 g) brown sugar
- 1 tsp (5 ml) vanilla extract
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup (250 ml) plain yogurt or sour cream
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) milk
- 1 tsp cocoa powder
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

Icing (optional)
- 1/2 cup (65 g) icing sugar
- 2 tsp (10 ml) milk

1. With the rack in the middle position, preheat the oven to 350 F (180 C). Generously butter an angel food cake pan with a removable bottom.

Topping

1. In a bowl, combine all dry ingredients. Add butter and mix with fingertips until the mixture is just moistened. Set aside.

Cake

1. In another bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.

2. In a third bowl, cream the butter, brown sugar and vanilla with an electric mixer. Add the eggs, one at a time, and beat until smooth. Add the dry ingredients alternately with the yogurt and stir until smooth.

3. Pour 1/2 cup (125 ml) of cake batter into a small bowl. Add the milk, cocoa powder and cinnamon and mix thoroughly. Set the cocoa batter aside.

4. Pour half of the vanilla cake batter into the prepared pan. Cover with cocoa batter. Sprinkle with half topping mix. Cover with the remaining batter and the remaining topping.

5. Bake for about 1 hour or until a toothpick inserted in the centre of the cake comes out clean. Let cool completely. Run a knife between the cake and the pan, then unmould.

Icing

6. Combine the icing sugar and milk with a fork. Drizzle on top of the cake.

FOLLOW RICARDO ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND ON RICARDOCUISINE.COM OR SUBSCRIBE TO HIS MAGAZINE'S ENGLISH EDITION, WHICH LAUNCHED IN 2014.

Liquid Assets

Toasting Robert Burns

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

Short of the first few lines of Auld Lang Syne I'd be hard pressed to quote you much else written by Robert Burns.

Not that my lack of knowledge of old school verse will stop me from celebrating the bard this Sunday with a glass of scotch and plate of haggis.

Ok, I may pass on the haggis this year but Robbie Burns Day is an opportunity to get over any fear you have of Scottish whisky.

Though its fans may have just choked on that last line, truth is scotch is a polarizing booze. Even when blended (its mellowest incarnation) it can pound on our palate with Hulk-like aggression.

The Robert Burns Single Malt Whisky ($44.95 - $69.99) from the Isle of Arran Distillery is an appropriate dram.

The only malt to be endorsed by The World Robert Burns Federation, it's a soft, floral whisky with light fruity undertones that sips like poetry in a glass. **PRICES REFLECT THE RANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ALL PROVINCES.**

This recipe makes four dozen Cantuccini. COURTESY RICARDOCUISINE.COM

A perfect coffee dipper

1. With the rack in the middle position, preheat the oven to 325 F (170 C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat.

2. In a bowl, combine the flour, ground almonds, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

3. In another bowl, cream the butter and sugar with an electric mixer. Add the eggs, one at a time until smooth. With a spatula, add the dry ingredients and liqueur and stir until the dough is smooth. Add almonds.

4. On a generously floured work surface, divide the dough into 4 pieces. With your hands, shape into four 10-inch (25 cm) long logs. Place the logs on the baking sheet, spacing them evenly. Bake for about 30 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool for 10 minutes.

5. With a bread knife, cut each roll into 3/4-inch (2 cm) thick slices. Place the cookies, standing up, on the baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown and dry. Let cool completely. **RICARDO**

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups (210 g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup (130 g) ground almonds
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 6 tbsp (84 g) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (210 g) sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tbsp almond liqueur
- 1 cup (170 g) almonds, chopped

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All-star game

Columbus right under the spotlight

John Davidson has travelled the world playing, talking about and scouting professional hockey.

He says his current outpost is a great place that few know about.

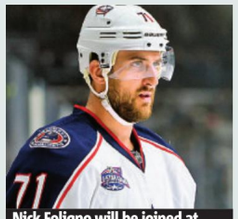
"Columbus, to me, in some ways, is a very well-kept secret," said Davidson, the director of hockey operations for the NHL's Blue Jackets.

That might change this weekend. The city and the Blue Jackets have a busy, busy few days in the spotlight.

Ohio's capital city will be the venue for this weekend's NHL all-star game, including the player draft on Friday night, a skills competition on Saturday and the game itself on Sunday at downtown's Nationwide Arena. There are many other related events, drawing thousands of visitors and television viewers.

Meanwhile, Ohio State, with its sprawling campus just a couple of miles from downtown, will celebrate its national championship in college football at massive Ohio Stadium on Saturday morning.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Nick Foligno will be joined at the all-star game by fellow Blue Jacket Ryan Johansen. GETTY IMAGES

Voracek: The unlikely league-leading scorer

NHL. Ahead of Crosby, Seguin and others, the Flyers right-winger tops at the all-star break

The NHL's leading scorer at the all-star break has never cracked 70 points in a season.

His ascension past Sidney Crosby, Tyler Seguin and all of the best scorers in hockey has made Philadelphia Flyers right-winger Jakub Voracek one of the most surprising stories of the first half of the season.

On pace for 95 points in his sixth year in the league, Voracek has surprised even himself with this kind of production.

"I would be lying if I said I knew I was going to be leading the points by January," said Voracek, who prefers to be called Jake. "I've really worked hard for it. But it doesn't mean that I was on top for 45 games and now I just let up. I've just got to keep working hard and try to get better."

It's still not clear how much better Voracek can get. He set a career high in points last season with 62 and has 56 in 48 games so far this season, on 17 goals and 39 assists.

Some of that is thanks to fellow all-star Claude Giroux, his linemate for the past two-plus seasons. Giroux is tied for third in the league in scoring.

"G's a smart player and he makes those passes just at the right time. With Jake's speed and the way he brings pucks to the net — and he can also pass the puck — they're both good at everything," said Flyers forward Vincent Lecavalier, who helped then-Lightning teammate Martin St. Louis win the Art Ross in 2004. "They're exceptional.... I think it just works well together."

Voracek and Giroux have excelled and produced even with a rotating cast of characters on left wing: Brayden Schenn, Matt Read, Michael Raffl and Wayne Simmonds. A lack of secondary scoring down the lineup, along with defensive miscues, has the Flyers well out of the playoff race.

But that's not Voracek's fault. The former Blue Jackets winger who was part of the deal that sent Jeff Carter to Columbus is enjoying his best season by far.

"I think it's more experience," Voracek said. "I'm more patient with the puck in the tight situations and on the power play.

"Every year I feel like when you gain that experience, when you play those games, you find different solutions sometimes for the situations on the ice. It's what it is: experience, work ethic, good teammates, good linemates. That's all it takes."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

In points

No one expected the Kladno, Czech Republic, native to produce quite like this.

- **NHL.** Voracek had never even broken the 50-point mark till last season.
- **QMJHL.** With the Halifax Mooseheads he put up 186 points in 112 games over two seasons.

Jakob Voracek has a surprising 56 points in 48 games this season. By comparison, in 2013-2014, he set a career-high 62 points. ELSA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

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Team Orr captain Connor McDavid, centre, carries the puck towards goal as Team Cherry players Anthony Beauvillier, left, and Noah Juulsen defend on Thursday night in St. Catharines, Ont. PETER POWER/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Team Orr tops Team Cherry

CHL. Konecny of OHL's Ottawa 67's shines at CHL top prospects game

Travis Konecny scored two goals and forced the turnover that led to another as part of an impressive showing at the CHL top prospects game.

Konecny of the Ontario Hockey League's Ottawa 67's skated with Connor McDavid and Timo Meier, and that line was a huge reason why Team Orr beat Team Cherry 6-0 at Meridian Centre on Thursday night in St. Catharines, Ont.

Ranked 26th among North American skaters on NHL Central Scouting's midterm list, Konecny was the best in off-ice testing Wednesday and then stood out again in the game playing with and against his peers.

Konecny scored on a semi-breakaway, beating Owen Sound goaltender Michael McNiven high glove side and then on a give-and-go with Meier. He had the big hit that helped get McDavid the puck on Meier's goal, the second of the night for Team Orr.

Defenceman Ryan Pilon and forwards Nathan Noel and Paul Bittner scored for the team coached by Boston Bruins legend Bobby Orr. Goaltenders Nick McBride of the Western Hockey League's Prince Albert Raiders and Liam Herbst of the 67's combined for the shutout.

Dylan Strome, a teammate of McDavid's on the Erie Otters, had a strong game for the team coached by Don Cherry.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

Crosby, Malkin drop out of ASG

Sidney Crosby will miss the NHL all-star game because of a lower-body injury, the Pittsburgh Penguins announced Thursday night.

Crosby was playing with the injury and will need about a week to heal, the team said in a statement. His Penguins teammate Evgeni Malkin has also been ruled out with a lower-body injury.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL

Stamps re-sign top receiver

The Calgary Stampeders signed veteran slotback Marquay McDaniel to a contract extension Thursday.

McDaniel missed six games with a hand injury last season but was still Calgary's leading receiver with 54 catches for 792 yards and four TDs. He added seven catches for 61 yards in the Stampeders' 20-16 Grey Cup win over the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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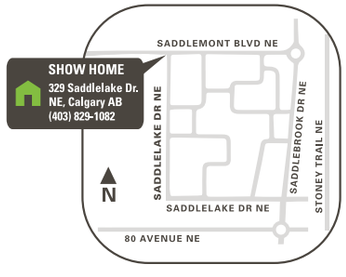

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Bouchard bowls over Garcia

Montreal's Eugenie Bouchard plays a backhand against Caroline Garcia of France on Friday in Melbourne, Australia. Bouchard recovered her rhythm late in the first set to beat Garcia 7-5, 6-0 in a third-round match featuring 10 breaks of serve at the Australian Open. CAMERON SPENCER/GETTY IMAGES

Bag of tricks at the ready

Super Bowl. Coaches Belichick and Carroll no strangers to calling deceptive plays to gain the upper hand

Some creative play calling on the part of coach Bill Belichick has helped the Patriots win the AFC championship. MADDIE MEYER/GETTY IMAGES

New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick has long been a fan of trick plays.

Some of them are even legal.

But he won't be alone in next week's Super Bowl: Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll also went deep in his playbook to earn a chance to play for an NFL championship.

Carroll used a fake field goal to help the Seahawks rally from a 16-point deficit and beat the Green Bay Packers in overtime in the NFC championship game. Belichick reached his sixth Super Bowl as a head coach with the help of a touchdown pass to a 320-pound offensive tackle.

That was one week after Belichick pulled out a double-pass and some innovative lineman deployment to beat the Baltimore Ravens, a strategy that impressed his Seahawks counterpart.

"I think it's great ball," Carroll said of the man who followed him with much success as the New England coach. "It's within rules; it's great ball. They are figuring out a way to get an advantage. ... It makes you stay on your toes; I think it's really good coaching."

Trick plays can make a coach look like a genius or a fool, but that's not really the point either. Just knowing they are in the opponent's playbook can keep a team off-balance and force it to prepare for unlikely options at the expense of more useful practice time.

And even if the coaches go conservative in the Super Bowl, that's almost as good.

"We thought it would work," Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said with a sly smile after his pass to tackle Nate Solder went for a touchdown against the Colts on Sunday. "So, I don't know. Maybe we have more tricks up our sleeve."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Deflate-gate

We dunno: Belichick and Brady claim ignorance

The two men most responsible for delivering wins for the New England Patriots both said Thursday they have no explanation for how footballs used to reach the Super Bowl were underinflated by two pounds per square inch.

Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said he has not been contacted by the NFL, even as league officials investigate whether the team cheated against the Indianapolis Colts.

"I don't know what happened," Brady said, answering questions from reporters hours after Patriots coach Bill Belichick said he almost never thinks about football pressure and doesn't know what happened, either.

Unlike Belichick, who briefly answered questions after a long opening remark by repeatedly saying "I've told you everything I know" and "I don't have an explanation," Brady answered many questions and said he doesn't think about football conditions during games.

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→ See the full instructions on Metro's Voices page.

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
This will be a busy day and you will get many important tasks out of the way. But don't forget about love. Let that special someone know that they mean the world to you.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You will get along with people in positions of authority well today and if you need a favour now is the time to ask. But don't let it go to your head.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Someone you think of highly has been waiting for you to declare your friendship, and maybe even your passion. If you do it today your relationship will go from good to great.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Make forgive and forget your motto today. According to the planets it simply is not worth your while continuing some kind of feud. Let it go.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
There is a ruthlessness about you right now, especially in partnership matters where you have no intention of letting anyone take advantage of you. Try not to be too hard-hearted.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Be careful what you spend your money on today because if you waste it on things you don't really need you will find yourself short of cash.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Give a friend or family member the benefit of the doubt today, even if you suspect they are telling you lies. According to your solar chart you won't lose out financially or emotionally.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You don't usually lack in the common sense department but today you will do something illogical. Others will be shocked but maybe that's the idea.

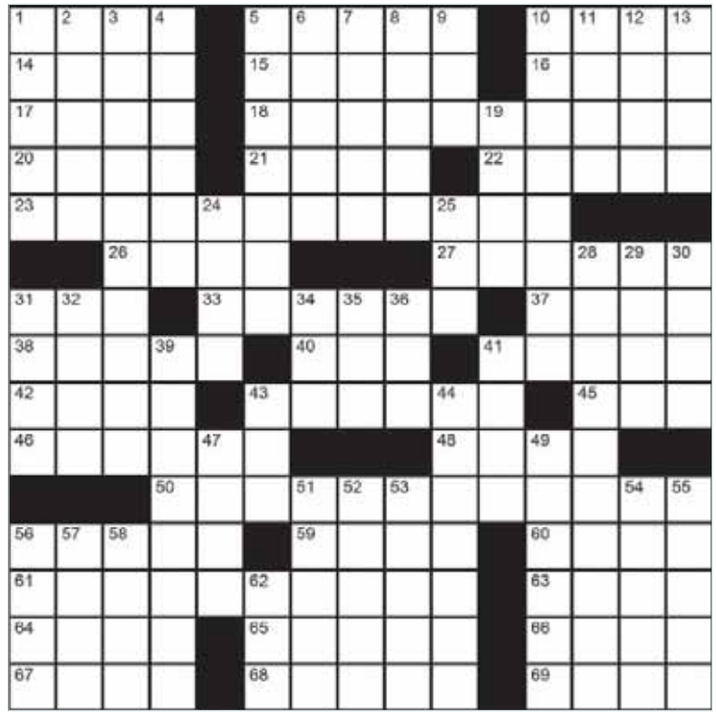
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
By helpful today but be wary too, especially of people who try to persuade you to lend them money. According to the planets they are up to no good.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
The more someone tries to convince you that you can do something wrong because it will lead to something right the further the distance you need to put between you.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You don't have to fight to get what you need. On the contrary, you will get everything you desire over the next two or three days simply by appealing to other people's generosity.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
If you have a secret, stay quiet. It may be about someone you don't care for but if it becomes public knowledge you will get blamed for the consequences.

Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



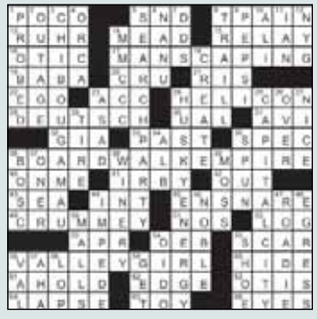
Across

1. Belonging to BC's ocean
5. Buddhist who has attained Nirvana
10. Rec room locale
14. Rhyming pattern
15. Stables sound
16. Man: Italian
17. Ms. Downey
18. Current album by Canadian band Mounties: '__ __ Legacy'
20. Lines giver
21. Islamic leader
22. Foot-to-leg connector
23. New animated movie; or, ELO song: 2 wds.
26. __ Ben Adhem (Leigh Hunt poem)
27. Gain
31. 2002 Winter Olympics locale [acronym]
33. Sacred river rising in the Himalayas
37. Perfect
38. Traveller Mr. Polo
40. Mr. Cruise
41. Now __ __ be told
42. At all
43. Big divides
45. And: German
46. Southeastern Saskatchewan town
48. Pres. Lincoln's
50. Gordon Lightfoot's "Song for a __ __"
56. "__ Less Ordinary" (1997)
59. Go __ __ great length
60. Mushroomed
61. Vancouver attraction, Deeley __ Exhibition
63. Perfect
64. Golfing great Mr. Aoki
65. More slight
66. Adjust the dial
67. Grown-up eft
68. That is, in Latin: 2 wds.
69. WWI fighter plane

Down

1. __ nationaux du Canada
2. Concerning
3. Reporter's entourage: 2 wds.
4. Ancient Egypt's divine beetle
5. Barbuda's island nation partner
6. Movie producer Robert
7. Veronica Lodge's father
8. Lizard type
9. Ordinal suffixes
10. Nova Scotia: __ Head Park, 'Home of the World's Highest Record Tides'
11. Vancouver-born broadcaster, __-Yin Lee
12. Nero's 2150
13. Particular puff
19. Snipped stuff
24. Cancelled
25. Li'l navigation aid
28. Marketing feedback source: 2 wds.
29. __ uproar: 2 wds.
30. Mind
31. Diving duck
32. Etna extraction
34. Utmost degree
35. Portuguese colony in India, once
36. First aid team [acronym]
39. Siksika chief in Alberta (b. circa 1830 - d.1890)
41. Paperback's ID
43. Coke container
44. Tony "__ _" Young (Canadian broadcaster who is an alum of MuchMusic)
47. Layer
49. Card game, Crazy __
51. Considered
52. Ink: French
53. Wheezing noises
54. Salon rinse
55. Shannon __ (Reality TV star born in St John's, Newfoundland)
56. Cole Porter's "I __ __ Love"
57. Misplace
58. "..._ __ a puddy tat!" - Tweety Bird
62. Gladiator's 901

Yesterday's Crossword

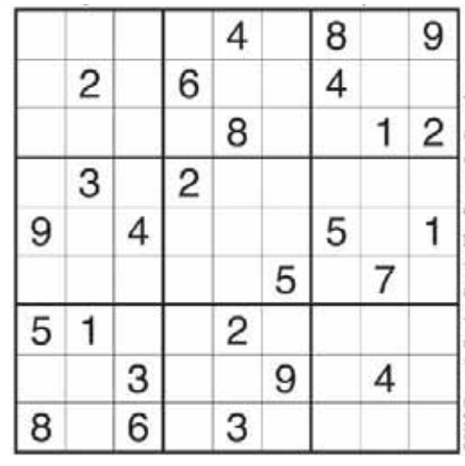


Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



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Yesterday's Sudoku

4	5	3	2	1	8	7	9	6
8	9	1	7	4	6	2	3	5
2	6	7	5	9	3	1	4	8
9	1	4	3	8	5	6	2	7
6	8	2	4	7	1	9	5	3
3	7	5	6	2	9	8	1	4
7	2	8	9	3	4	5	6	1
1	3	6	8	5	2	4	7	9
5	4	9	1	6	7	3	8	2

WHAT WOULD YOU BE REMEMBERED FOR?

It is not everybody that is called or volunteered to serve that has the right motive. Judas was called to serve in the ministry of Jesus but his motive was wrong. So, It was not difficult for him to betray the Messiah as it is written, " The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss." - *Matthew 26:48 NLT* You will either be remembered for the problem you create or solved. Endeavour to leave a legacy that God and even man will be proud of.

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